

TURNING LEAVES

By

ELLEN PROCTOR

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With the exception of Giacomo Constantine Beltrami and the mention of a few prominent historical characters of both the past and present, the characters in this book are entirely fictitious, and no reference to characters living or dead has been intended or should be inferred. The situations are wholly imaginary.

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Born Feb. 2, 1802
Died Oct. 30, 1853

James

Born Mar. 11, 1825
Died Apr. 19, 1890

Julia

Born July 1, 1827
Died Aug. 10, 1880

Gabrielle

Born Dec. 4, 1830
Died Mar. 14, 1892

James Livingston II

Born Mar. 11, 1825
Died Apr. 19, 1890

married
Ann Severs

Born June 30, 1835
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Born Aug. 5, 1853
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John

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PART ONE

1

AS usual, dinner was served in the long, panelled dining-room. But to-night, with the penetrating effect of several whiskies and sodas upon him, it pleased James Livingston IV to view the family seated around the table in relation to the room they occupied.

Liquor seldom dulled James Livingston's perceptions. More often it sharpened his faculties, heightened his wit. It not only gave him pleasure but insight and a clear wisdom as well. So to-night he glanced musingly around the room, reading the past into the present. The faces of his sons and daughters were sharpened and shadowed by the flickering wall candles that James Livingston III had refused to replace with electric torches when he had had the old house wired for electricity.

"No glare for my stomach," he had ruled, and for the rest of his days had eaten by candle-light.

James IV respected the whim of his father, and in the lighted tapers, kept faith with an intimate and gracious past whose whisperings could be heard in every room of the Livingston home.

The candles were lighted to-night because a summer thunderstorm had turned the early evening into night. The light was kind to the room, James reflected, and flattering to its occupants. But his own eyes had a clarity that would not be denied.

The wall-paper was streaked and faded, but the woodwork had an age-old beauty. The mahogany furniture, gracefully Sheraton in design, had been shipped from Boston to Minnesota in 1848 by the first James Livingston. He had given it to his wife on the twenty-fifth anniversary of their marriage.

James IV wondered what his great-grandfather would have thought of the group now assembled at his family board. He had played host himself to stranger guests than these in the days when Riverside was being settled and traders, *voyageurs*, fur trappers, huntsmen, and soldiers had dined at the Livingston table. He had found the adventure and variety he had sought when he threw up his law practice in New York and roamed through the unsettled lands of the Middle

West, finding an anchorage at last in Minnesota and founding the family whose descendants surrounded James Livingston IV to-night.

There were seven of them and his wife, whose separate blood showed in her homely figure and unilluminated face as she listened to the dinner-table chatter. To James each one bespoke some special quality, some inherited family trait. Their faces and bodies, young and still plastic, had the Livingston impress, but their manners, their clothes, and to a certain extent their viewpoints, were slipshod.

"Slipshod," James repeated to himself, "just like me," the glow of the evening insufficient to obscure the knowledge that he drank too much, that the chains of his marriage dragged, that his law practice flickered and dwindled, that he failed to keep up with the family bills. Nevertheless, he could look around his dinner-table with satisfaction. The children in themselves were an achievement. In their own divergent ways they would keep the Livingston traditions alive. James' liquor swished around in his mind and he chuckled to himself.

James V, fifteen, thin and blond, looked up from his plate. "What's funny?" he asked, his voice breaking on a high note.

Sue giggled, tossing back her dark hair. "*You* sound funny," she told Jimmy. But her brown eyes switched to her father's face with the rush of love she felt for him when humour sparkled through his habitual geniality.

James IV smiled appreciatively at Sue, then turned his attention to the other lifted faces. "I was thinking of us," he said, "and all the Livingstons before us. We belong to the old family, but we're not of it. We're like an addition—a room added on to an old house."

He saw the frown that drew the fleet dark brows of his eldest daughter into a straight line. He smiled again, waiting. He took delight in baiting Julia. She argued well; her reasoning was sound and provocative. But she had no sense of humour to balance her intelligence.

"I don't think that's particularly funny," she told him coldly.

"Now you're picking up Jimmy's words, not mine," James reminded her. "I would say we're incongruous, out of proportion."

He watched the storm gathering force in her eyes. Julia was blonde and lovely, full of promise. As lovely as his wife had been when he married her. James sighed, looking regretfully at Mary.

"I think it's tragic," Julia observed. "For years the Livingstons have been a power in Minnesota; and now, we're just an old family gone to seed. An old name, an old history, and an old house—all of which we haven't the money to keep up."

"Julia!" Mary's voice was reproachful. She could not bear the ruffling of her daughter's discontent. James might pride himself on the family tradition, but it was she who saw that the mahogany was polished, that the debts were half-way met, that the Livingstons kept a front through all their shabbiness.

"It's true, ma." Julia stared at her mother with irritation. She glanced around the table. The faces of her brothers and sisters were cheerful, indifferent. They were used to moans over the sinking glory of the Livingston clan. She turned to her father, but his manner was mocking.

"Yes, it's true," he agreed with entire good nature. "And I'll take the blame for the deterioration." He laughed wholeheartedly. "But it's a good life anyway, and I'm hungry. Please pass the hamburger, Mary."

Julia rustled her napkin. "It's not a good life," she protested. "What's good about it? No life is worth anything without money to make it comfortable. Look at ma and me. Dead on our feet from doing the washing to-day. Now if we had a new machine——" She stared challengingly at her father.

"We can't afford it," interrupted Mary wearily.

"Not until I get the money for the Jorgenson case, anyway," James added, his usual optimism blanketing Julia's protests.

"When will that be?" Julia asked.

"The case goes to court next month. The twentieth."

"A whole month!" Julia's fork picked aimlessly at her carrots. Things were settled in her mind now. "Well," she announced with decision, "I'm looking for a job at once."

Her father, studying the face of his purposeful daughter, repeated, "A job? You mean for the summer?"

"No, a permanent one."

James looked disappointed. "You're not going back to the University in the fall?"

"No!" Julia's negative cracked through the room like a whip. "I'm tired of not having money."

"Well"—James eyed his daughter thoughtfully—"better people than you have skimmed through college and gone without money, too. But if you want to work, that's your business. You're almost eighteen, aren't you? You may not know your own mind, but you'll be the one to discover that."

"Don't worry. I know what I'm doing." Julia's voice had a scornful edge.

James ignored her bitterness, put his suave touch on the inevitable. Well, it's a good business year," he pointed out. "You shouldn't have any trouble finding a job. But since school has just closed, you might as well take it easy for a while. You have all the rest of your life to work."

"Maybe she'll get married," suggested Gabrielle, her voice easy after Julia's assertive tones. Gabrielle was slightly younger than Jimmy and as thin as her brother, but there the resemblance ended. Her hair and eyes were dark, her manner thoughtful.

Jimmy snorted. "Don't make me laugh."

Julia ignored their remarks. She was used to the digs of her sisters and brothers. She stood alone, outside the disorderly ripples that they set up in their young exuberance. Her manner was still intense as she pursued her line of thought. "I don't want to take it easy. I want to do something. Maybe one of the Beltrami girls can put the Livingstons on the map again."

"Why not count me in on that?" cried Gabrielle. "I'm one of the Beltrami girls!"

"I'm not your keeper," retorted Julia.

James glanced from Julia's yellow head to Gabrielle, whose dark hair curled softly against the clear line of her cheek. No, Julia would not be Gabrielle's keeper. Again the whispers of the past stirred in the panelled room for him.

"That's a good idea," he said. "The Beltrami girls have been little more than a legend since the first Gabrielle. It would be interesting to see what the two of you could do to the family history."

Julia's eyes were brilliant with determination, but Gabrielle's shone with dreams.

"Watch me!" said Julia.

"Watch me!" declared Gabrielle. "I think I'll be in the operetta next year."

James' glance softened as he caught her wistful eagerness. "The lead, my dear?" he asked kindly.

"Why not, father—why not?"

Mary had been waiting for an opening. "Gabrielle, take out the plates," she ordered.

Gabrielle started, but obeyed in silence, her fingers stacking the plates deftly.

James looked at Mary, then at his daughter. It was hard to keep an illusion alive even for a moment in Mary's presence. He saw her move clumsily to the sideboard, cut a cake into thick wedges and

transfer them to frail old plates. The Beltrami tradition meant nothing to Mary, but James liked to remember that an earlier Julia and Gabrielle, sisters too, had lived in this house—that Julia's life had been stormy and Gabrielle's smooth, that both girls had loved the same man and Julia had married him. Gabrielle ultimately had gone to France, her mother's birthplace, and had married an artist, who had blotted out all memory of her sister's husband. Of the two she had been happier, for Julia's pretensions in a region still nakedly pioneer had reaped a harvest of disapproval for her, and of misery for her husband.

James half rose and bowed courteously to Julia as she left the table, the last of his family to scatter for the night. She looked back at him with a tinge of concern, as she saw him go to the sideboard and pour himself a brandy. But James went blithely about his familiar rite. He had ignored disapproval all his life. Although his younger children accepted him in their stride, for many years Mary had ridden him hard about his drinking. But she had been no match for his bland indifference. James had never been brutal enough to tell his wife that some fundamental failure in their relations had driven him more and more to this release of spirit, and that once established, the habit had become a pleasurable necessity.

James moved about the room, blowing out candles. He took his brandy and went to the library, where he sipped it slowly, his thoughts still deep in the past. So Julia was going to put the Livingstons on the map again. Julia, a Beltrami girl. That old aura that had surrounded the names of Julia and Gabrielle from generation to generation, that went back to the romantic attachment of Giacomo Constantine Beltrami for a Julia he had known in Italy—a girl who had never seen this house, had never set foot in the wild land that was to be the territory of Minnesota. She was, indeed, little more than a legend, yet she had followed the Livingstons through four generations, and was alive again in his blonde and tempestuous daughter.

James liked to dwell on the influence the Italian explorer had had on his family. He had flashed across Minnesota soil with much stir in the 1820's—a lawyer and linguist, an officer in the Italian army, a civil judge, and an explorer who sought the source of the Mississippi, determined to stake a claim to fame in the tradition of Marco Polo and Columbus.

At first he attached himself to Major Stephen H. Long's exploratory expedition up the Minnesota and down the Red River in 1823. They proceeded unmolested by canoe and horseback, as the Sioux were absent hunting buffalo on the plains of the West. They prospected

territory that one day was to become the richest wheat land of the continent. But there were temperamental differences between them.

At Pembina, Beltrami left the expedition and struck out on his own into the wilderness to the south-west, where he believed the Mississippi to have its source. His Chippewa guides bolted when chased by a party of Sioux and he was left alone on the Red Lake River. He could not paddle the canoe loaded with his belongings, so he had to tow it upstream by the painter until he met a Chippewa who agreed to navigate it for him to Red Lake.

Soon he came to a heart-shaped lake, three miles in circumference, which he believed to be the northern source of the Mississippi. The water was boiling up from a depth he was unable to sound, and was without visible issue. He named it Lake Julia, in memory of the girl who had died in Italy, beloved by him. In this way he brought the name Julia into the topography of Minnesota and the life of the Livingston clan.

James rolled the brandy in his glass, drank it deeply. And the first Gabrielle—she, too, had entered the harsh pioneer life of early Minnesota from afar, and with foreign traditions. Born Gabrielle Le Duc, and transplanted by a roving father from her native France to the far shores of the Mississippi, she had fallen in love with the young English lawyer, James Livingston. Her father had bitterly opposed the marriage on religious grounds. However, Beltrami, as a friend of the family, interceded for the young people; and because he had once saved the life of Gabrielle's father, Monsieur Le Duc listened to his plea that James and she should be allowed to marry.

They asked Beltrami what they could do to repay him for his good offices. He suggested that they name their first girl child Julia, to carry on a name that he could never hope to perpetuate himself. And because he admired Gabrielle, he asked that she give her second daughter her own name.

James chose a site close to the river bank in Winston to build a home for his bride. With the help of other residents of Fort Snelling, he cleared the land. The work progressed slowly, for most of his time was taken up with trapping and fur trading and whatever demands were made on his knowledge of law so that only his spare hours were spent on the land and the plans for the new house.

Then in March, 1825, Gabrielle gave birth to a son, whom she named James after his father. Gabrielle's subsequent illness lasted the entire winter and only in the fullness of spring did she venture out of the small house on the reservation. Although her health returned

gradually during the summer, James did not feel justified in taking her away from the conveniences and protection of the Fort before another winter set in. So it was not until the summer of 1826 that the Livingstons moved into a brown log house on the eastern bank of the St. Peter.

Next year a daughter was born within its snug walls, and three years later, another daughter. The first was named Julia and the second Gabrielle, and a letter was dispatched after each birth to Beltrami to inform him of the fulfilment of his wish. The marriage he had sponsored was already a great success.

More than a hundred years had passed since then, but the first Gabrielle, lovely and foreign, with a dark beauty that had flowered despite the rigorous life of the Fort, seemed present in the room to-night. James' gaze sought the portrait of his great-grandmother, hanging above the fireplace. Her dark eyes regarded him with a faint and lovely smile. The corners of her mouth tilted upward.

"You were a beautiful woman," said James, and did not notice that he spoke aloud.

More beautiful than either of her daughters. More beautiful indeed, than any of the girls who followed in her wake. She had died at the age of fifty-one, and her hair had been as richly black, her eyes as young as the day she married the first James Livingston. Her husband had loved her until the day of his death twenty-one years later. The singleness of his affection had never deserted either of them.

James frowned into the brown eyes. "I suppose you think we're pretty poor sorts," he thought. "We who love ourselves so much and others so little."

The brandy in his glass ran low. Automatically he refilled it. If only the picture of Mary wouldn't come between him and the first Gabrielle. In his choice of a wife James felt that he had betrayed his inheritance. Impossible that the woman smiling down at him should be a great-grandmother! She was just a girl, a gracious and charming young woman—— For the moment she seemed alive, her lips curved for speech, her eyes bright with understanding. A woman that James himself could have loved.

The fire dwindled. Gabrielle receded within her frame, lifeless again. James was conscious that his glass was empty, that the hour was late, that Mary would be upstairs, sound asleep, her flabby body of no interest to him whatsoever.

Lips compressed, James measured himself another drink from the

cut-glass decanter on the liquor-cabinet. But the past shadowed his chair, leaned over his shoulder as he drank.

Mary had been seventeen when he married her—a calm and gentle girl whose silence he had never questioned until it was too late. For the first time in many years he remembered another girl he might have married—remembered distinctly the expression that had passed over Muriel Sandborn's face when he had told her he was going to marry Mary Jones. Disbelief, pursued by swift, unmistakable pain. The tremor about her mouth had given her away.

He hadn't thought much about it then. Muriel's grief had been a fleeting impression in the surging pride of his love. Later—not so much later—the quickly stilled quiver of Muriel's lips had haunted his memory. Her voice, too—murmuring, "I hope you'll be happy." A neat, adequate phrase that had not begun to cover his future. Perhaps Muriel would have failed him, too. Perhaps it was he, James, who was at fault. Certainly he had not found love as the other men of his family who bore his name had known it.

In turn they had married Gabrielle Le Duc, Ann Severs, and Beth Johnstone, all women of charm, or character, or both—women who had held them throughout the years. He could not blame Mary altogether. James knew himself for a weak link in the family chain. But a link nevertheless. And perhaps one of his children, now asleep upstairs, would restore the old tradition of vigour and achievement. He could count on Julia for strength and selfishness, on Gabrielle for warmth and family feeling. Already he could see in Gabrielle some of the qualities of his great-grandmother.

James shrugged his shoulders and stood up. He raised his glass to the first Gabrielle.

"Here's to you, and the rest of your tribe!"

He drained the glass.

2

BY three o'clock in the morning the whole household was up and alert again. A cry from Rene had penetrated the deep and tired sleep that was now habitual to the overworked Mary. With a faded bathrobe looped about her clumsy body, she hurried into Rene's room, bent over her bed.

"What's the matter, child?" she asked kindly.

"It's a pain," wailed Rene. "I don't feel good."

"Maybe it was all that cake you ate at dinner. Maybe you need castor-oil."

"Oh, no, ma." Rene raised her head in protest. "My side hurts." Julia, who had not yet fallen asleep, stood at the door. "Which side?" she asked abruptly.

Rene's small hand pressed her right side. "I feel like throwin' up," she moaned.

Mary went for a basin. Rene continued to moan, but she did not throw up.

"I'll get father," Julia announced.

Jimmy came bounding in, his pyjamas violently striped, his blond hair standing up on end. "Well, for Pete's sake," he cried, "what's going on here? What's the matter, Rene?"

Julia roused her father. Dreams scattered, his mind as alert as if he had not touched a drop of brandy, James pulled on a robe as he made his way quickly downstairs to the hall. Through Rene's open door they heard his rich, pleasant voice giving a number to the telephone operator.

"Kit's number," Gabrielle said unnecessarily. She had followed Julia to Rene's room.

The flash of lights scattered the deep shadows of the old house. One dim lamp outlined the sick child tossing on her bed. The family waited, their eyes on her white face, their ears strained to their father's words.

"Doctor Roberts, please." There was a pause, vibrant with listening. "Hello, Kit. James Livingston speaking. I know it's an unearthly hour. I'm sorry, old man, but can you drop over right away? Yes—yes—— Rene complains of a pain in her right side and nausea. Yes. Sounds like it. All right. Thanks, Kit."

James came upstairs. "There are too many of you here," he commented. "Give the child a chance." He jerked his head towards Mary. "Have we an ice-bag?"

"My goodness," said Mary, "I was going for the hot-water bottle. Did Kit say ice?"

"Let me get it," Jimmy volunteered.

He found the ice-bag and clattered downstairs towards the kitchen.

"The noise that boy makes," complained Mary, feeling Rene's hot forehead.

Julia grabbed David on the threshold. His four-year-old curiosity

had brought him in on sturdy legs to gape at his sister. "You stay outside, young man," she told him firmly. "And you, too," she commanded Larry who had attempted to follow his younger brother. Both boys had the fresh, warm look of children awakened from sleep.

With Larry and David in tow, Julia turned to her mother as Mary paused in the doorway to the hall. "I hope this doesn't mean an operation," she said.

Mary's eyes wavered. "So do I——" she began draggily, but Jimmy's high voice interrupted her. "Here's the ice, ma."

James stood at the window looking out into the stormy night. "It's raining pitch-forks," he said. Then he saw that the ice had come, but before he could reach the bed, Mary had deftly applied it to Rene's side. Motherly hands tucked her in securely and for the moment she lay still.

While they waited for the doctor, the entire family roamed the upstairs hall, sticking close to the door of Rene's room. The small ones were subdued by the groans and cries of their sister. They were a healthy family, not inured to the crises of childish sickness. Not since Jimmy had come down with scarlet fever had there been so much nocturnal excitement in the Livingston house. Jimmy seemed to be the most anxious of the lot as he hovered at Mary's heels, constantly asking if he could do another errand. Sue hung over the bed, white and speechless. Julia by now was coldly competent. Gabrielle was close to tears, but it was she who heard the knocker announcing the doctor's arrival. She flew to the front door, relief welling over her at the sight of his tall figure in the subdued light of the hall.

He took one look at her face, then said gently, "My dear, I'll do all I can for Rene. It won't help her to have you worry like this. Besides, it may be nothing."

Gabrielle nodded. "I know. But she's so little."

"But good and strong for all that. Is she upstairs?"

"Yes. Here—let me take your coat and hat."

Clutching the wet coat and hat in her arms, Gabrielle watched the doctor take the stairs two at a time. Except for her father, there was no man she loved and admired more than she did Kit. But this was Christopher Roberts, the doctor, brisk and reassuring, not the friend who spent much of his leisure with them. He had gone to the University of Minnesota with James, and through the hard years that followed had kept in close touch with the Livingstons. He had no family, so the sons and daughters of his friend became as his own. And Gabrielle, gentle and gay, was his favourite child.

With Kit in the house, Gabrielle's world steadied itself. He wouldn't let anything happen to Rene. It was as simple as that. Even when he rushed her to the hospital for an emergency appendectomy, Gabrielle's faith in him never wavered.

"She'll be all right," she said, watching the doctor pull on his hat. Kit smiled. "Of course she will, Gabrielle."

Rene was operated on within the hour. James and Mary Livingston waited in the corridor outside the operating-room. Mary was white and shaking; James, cool, composed, only his eyes were anxious.

"Maybe she'll die," Mary whimpered.

"She won't die," James said positively.

At home, the rest of the Livingstons huddled together in the library. It was chilly in the house with the damp morning creeping on, so Jimmy kindled a fire in the fireplace with odds and ends of wood from the basement.

"We should have logs," Julia said, screwing herself deep into her father's old wool sweater.

"Huh! There're lots of things we should have," Jimmy pointed out. He sat back on his heels to watch the flames creep through wads of newspaper and lick at the wood. "Of course, when you're working," he began with heavy sarcasm, but his voice broke ridiculously. "Damn!" he muttered softly while a wave of red covered his neck and ears.

"When I'm working, things will be different," said Julia coolly. "Yes, you're right. They will."

Gabrielle settled David more comfortably in her arms. He was shivering with excitement, the sleep chased from his eyes. "Maybe for you," she said, looking at Julia over the boy's tousled dark head. "But you won't make enough to keep up this house and family."

"I heard ma say the taxes are eating us out of house and home." Jimmy had left the flickering fire and enthroned himself in a big leather armchair. He pulled Curwood's *Nomads of the North* from the book-shelf.

"How can you guys read?" exclaimed Sue. She was sitting on the edge of her chair. Her cold hands made one tight fist in her lap.

"We have to do something," Julia retorted.

"Don't worry, Sue," Gabrielle reassured her. "Kit will take care of Rene."

Julia sniffed. "Kit!"

Gabrielle straightened up. "Yes, Kit! He'll see that Rene's all right."

"Why don't you like Kit, Julia?" Jimmy asked slyly, looking up from his book.

Julia coloured. "I've never liked him."

"Because he doesn't like you," ragged Larry. "That's why."

Julia regarded Larry's drooping eyelids malignantly. "If you're sleepy, why don't you go to bed?"

Larry's eyes opened wide. "I ain't sleepy. Anyway, I wantta see how Rene is."

"Such talk!" Julia criticized. "'I ain't sleepy.' *I'm not sleepy.* What do they teach you in school, anyhow?"

"Not anyhow," said Larry.

Flames scorched Julia's cheeks. What a family! It was always like that. Argue, argue, argue about trifles. None of them would stand correction. "You'd better go to bed," she told him sharply. "Whether you're asleep or awake won't keep Rene alive."

"Do you think she'll die?" quavered Sue.

"No!" yelled Jimmy. He swung on Julia. "Listen, mush mouth, what's your head full of? Hot air!"

"Oh, hush up!" cried Gabrielle. "David's asleep." She laid him on the sofa near the fire.

"Better cover him up," Julia suggested.

"Give me time." Gabrielle slipped an arm around Sue. "Don't cry. Rene'll be all right," she comforted her small sister. "I know she will."

"You don't know," wailed Sue, her thoughts still clinging to Julia's careless remark. "You don't know!"

"Be quiet!" scolded Julia. "You'll wake David." She groaned. "Now, Larry, don't *you* cry."

Jimmy tossed his book on the table. "You can thank yourself for this mess," he said, turning his back on Julia. "Come on, you kids, let's play rummy."

The telephone bell broke through the middle of the rummy game. Julia reached the receiver first. The conversation was brief. As she hung up, she turned to the strained young faces gathered around her. "Rene's all right," she said. "Ma and father'll be home right away."

When Mary and James Livingston left Rene's room in the hospital, they bumped into Doctor Roberts in the corridor. His work done, he was relaxed and sanguine. Their anxiety seemed absurd in the face of such confidence.

"Send Gabrielle down to see me," Kit said, after he had talked to them briefly about Rene. "Or better, have her call me first."

"What's the matter with Gabrielle?" gasped Mary.

"Nothing at all. I just want to talk to her about her voice." The memory of her white face at the door was deep in Kit's consciousness. James said, "I'll tell her, Kit."

On the way home, Mary peered worriedly through the dripping windscreen. The light reflected on the pavement struck forcibly against her eyeballs, aggravating the dull ache that banded her head. Now that Rene was safe a new worry dulled her spirit—an ever recurrent worry.

"How are we going to pay for this?" she asked.

James' shoulders lifted. "You have me there."

"Did you have a case to-day?"

"No. One to-morrow though. The Billings' divorce. But don't worry about it, Mary."

"I have to. You don't."

"Why should I? Worrying never paid a bill yet."

The dragging chains forged by Mary irked James mightily as he sought respite in the library. He found his children grouped around the fire. Not one of them had gone to bed. He greeted them pleasantly and picked his way over their feet to the liquor-cabinet. He poured himself a stiff brandy and sat down to talk to the children about Rene. One by one they trailed off to bed.

The night stretched behind him in full panorama. His family had the knack of always pulling him back into the present. He drew the curtains back. It was raining still. The life of a child was strangely dear when it was threatened. Rene had looked like a small blue shadow under her covering blankets as she was wheeled into the operating-room. Well, he would have to get to bed or he would be no earthly good in court to-morrow. One last drink. A short one.

James refilled his glass, and sank deep into his favourite chair.

3

THE late morning was cloudless, sun-brushed. Summer had paused to give spring one more day. With windows wide open, Julia dressed carefully for her job hunt.

Gabrielle sat on the settee and watched Julia put the finishing

touches to her appearance—a blue hat over her blonde hair; white gloves, the cuffs stiffly starched, drawn over carefully manicured fingers. Julia could do more with her looks, in a quieter, more subtle way, Gabrielle reflected, the sort of thing one caught in the fashion illustrations, but could not quite put into words. Besides, she did not wish to diminish Julia's self-esteem to-day.

"I suppose you'll come home private secretary to Mr. Chambers," Gabrielle offered.

Julia's mouth hardened. She looked at herself in the mirror. The vision she saw was young, fresh, touched with pride. And smart, to her way of thinking. She flung back her blonde head and looked straight at Gabrielle. "I'll get there," she said.

"I'm sure you will," Gabrielle agreed.

Her glance lit on the bedspread made by the first Gabrielle, the double miniatures in ivory that hung by the white mantelpiece. "I wonder how they'd have gone about job hunting," she said. "Our typewriters and shorthand would have seemed as funny to them as their spinning-wheels and such do to us now."

"No doubt," conceded Julia. "But those lovely ladies father worships didn't just 'sit on a cushion and sew a fine seam.' In her first years in Minnesota the first Gabrielle must have baked and mended and washed beyond anything we've ever dreamed."

"And chased the Indians too, no doubt," laughed Gabrielle.

"Well, you've heard father tell how she hoed and planted potatoes, and made doughnuts and bread, and cooked in earthenware pots, and brought up her babies without medical care, and lived in an atmosphere of constant warfare between the Sioux and Chippewa."

"And on occasion wore the ball gowns she'd brought from France. To the dances at the Fort."

"And Ann Severs, the second James' wife whirled to a wicked measure. She had a strain of New England blood from her father, a teacher who travelled from Vermont to Minnesota. Father says he did it mostly by foot and wound up at Mendota, where he joined the American Fur Company. Ann somehow kept the frivolous touch, but she did make a fine pioneer, fearless and strong-willed. You know that she saw the first rafts of logs floated down the St. Croix River, and that she travelled here and there with her father by birch-bark canoe. St. Paul was just emerging from the wilderness in her youth. It was a little hamlet—a dozen frame houses, and eight or ten small log buildings with birch-bark roofs, mostly Indian whisky shops and the cabins of half-breed *voyageurs*."

"You sound just like father," chuckled Gabrielle.

"Well——" flared Julia.

But Gabrielle interrupted, "Oh, I love it!" She eyed the miniatures appraisingly.

Ann's face was as cold and secretive as Gabrielle Le Duc's was warm and seductive. James had often told the girls that even in the froth of her wedding-gown Ann Severs was not considered a beauty. Women didn't like her, and at first glance, men paid her scant attention. But the men and the women always looked again, for without any conventional claims to beauty, Ann was a compelling person. There was something about her—the turn of her head, the shield of eyelashes screening eyes whose warmth belied the chill white face—that held James Livingston II until he died. Tormented him, indeed, nearly all the days of his married life. For Ann Severs took James' name, kept his house, bore his children and remained away from him even in his arms. Yet her very remoteness pitched James' own love high, enslaved him as surely as if her long white hands had locked chains about his wrists.

James Livingston III grew up to this undercurrent of unhappiness and turned with repressed hatred from the coldness of his mother to the warm gentleness of Beth Johnstone, who became his wife. Although her words were leashed, Ann's attitude to the stranger coming into the family was interference itself, for she had ruled her son as firmly as she had enslaved her husband, but Beth in her quiet way had stood up to the unspoken domination and given no ground to her mother-in-law. She had died too soon for the issue ever to be closed between them. Ann not merely lived on. She had reigned on.

"What a shame Grandmother died at twenty-nine!" said Gabrielle. "Even father remembers her very little."

"Enough to think that you are like her, Gabrielle."

James often told Gabrielle that she resembled her grandmother—not in looks, for Beth was red-headed and creamy skinned, but in her manners, her humour.

"Grandmother must have had plenty of backbone to hold her own against Ann Severs," Julia remarked. "Ann was a hellion if there ever was one. In a respectable sort of way, of course. But she made the family count. As they prospered it was she who added one possession after another to the house, who made her husband work his way to real distinction in a growing city. Besides setting herself up as something of a social dictator."

Gabrielle surmised, "I'll bet all the women hated her."

Julia nodded. "Father said she was the most cold-blooded siren that ever swung a crinoline."

Gabrielle laughed suddenly. "I just thought of something. Jimmy's always crabbing about being a grocery clerk. And here James II ran a grocery store."

"In defiance of family tradition——" Julia began and interrupted herself, "Goodness, Gabrielle!" She jumped to her feet. "All this talk when I ought to be on my way. We should leave all that to father. He revels in it."

Gabrielle stretched and yawned. "Give Mr. Chambers my best regards."

Julia's good humour vanished. "Go ahead—razz me. But I'll show you yet!"

She slammed out of the room to Gabrielle's merry accompaniment: "Remember you're a lady!"

In spite of her annoyance, Julia's sense of ancestry was in full flower as she walked resolutely to the Court House and there looked up the Board of Education's Employment Service. There were four others ahead of her in the waiting-room. Two girls her own age, neatly groomed, ill at ease. An elderly woman in a smart grey dress and hat. And a boy of about eighteen.

Julia took stock of herself in the present company and was pleased with the results. "I'm ahead of them," she assured herself. "I've got to be ahead of them."

The woman who took her application Julia labelled uninteresting, yet in a year, in ten years, she never forgot Lola Wilson's face or voice. Her grey eyes were coldly impersonal yet touched with surprising flashes of warmth, her voice was low-pitched, faintly husky. She looked up Julia's high school record and her score in the college placement test. She fingered the record card thoughtfully.

"Julia Livingston," she said, and smiled. "Now I know why the name sounded so familiar. You see, I majored in history. So I know you're one of the Beltrami girls."

Julia smiled, too, with full consciousness of her family prestige. "Yes, I am," she said.

Miss Wilson did not pursue the subject. Instead, she asked, "Why aren't you going back to the University?"

"I'd rather work," Julia replied coldly. The months had moved slowly there. The returns had been invisible.

"You should have done good work there."

"I did good work. But I'll do just as good in an office."

Miss Wilson's grey eyes were suddenly remote. "You have no experience. You type a little—a very little. You don't know short-hand. Well, Miss Livingston, I may be able to place you in a straight clerical job. It will probably be temporary at first."

Julia's mouth tightened. "I'd like a permanent job."

Miss Wilson's tone left no room for doubt. "You'll need experience. Call me in the morning, Miss Livingston. I may have something for you then."

Julia went out into the sunshine, her temper waving red banners in her cheeks. She stalked down Twentieth Street to Wainwright Avenue. At the corner of Wainwright and Twenty-Second Street, a gay voice hailed her. "Julia! Julia Livingston!" A tall, dark young man doffed his grey hat. "Well, how's the girl?"

Julia's face softened. "Hello, Bob. What are you doing downtown?"

"Business." He indicated a flat package under his arm. "I'm on my way to the engraver's." He surveyed her shining bloneness approvingly. Even the hideous styles of 1928 could not conceal her loveliness. "What are you doing so early in the morning?"

"Looking for a job."

"Well, what d'you know! Aren't you going back to school?"

"I'm tired of books."

Bob Spencer shook his head. "Lady, them's careless words. ~~The~~ begin to work is to work for ever."

"You should copyright it. Anyway, you're working."

"Oh, sure. That's to be expected. Besides, I've had this job for five summers. So when I got my degree, the job was still there."

"I'm not interested in a degree," Julia said. "I want to get somewhere the quickest way I know how."

Bob laughed. "It should be easy. Anyway, here's luck to you."

"Thanks," said Julia dubiously. "Glad to have seen you, Bob."

"Wait a minute—are you going to be downtown long?"

"All day, I imagine."

"How about having lunch with me?"

"Oh, I'd like to. Unless I get sent out on a job."

"Let's put it this way—I'll meet you at twelve at Chambers'. The Twenty-Second and Wainwright entrance. I'll wait exactly ten minutes. No more, no less. Fair enough?"

"Fair enough," Julia agreed.

After lunching with Bob Spencer at the Chambers' tea-room, Julia decided that Bob was well worth cultivating. She not only liked his

physical appearance, but she could appreciate the casual familiarity with which he greeted men and women who were merely prominent and influential names to her.

"These are the kind of people I should know," she told herself when Bob presented her to Jan Smithson, the *Beacon's* ace columnist, and his protégée, Denise DeLaittre.

"She's really Denise Johnson," Bob remarked as they made their way to the elevators. "And she's a damned poor dancer, Smithson protégée or not."

It was after six o'clock when Julia reached home. Her head ached and her feet hurt. Except for the noonday respite with Bob, the day had been a disappointing one. Julia had expected a job to be laid in her lap, but "call to-morrow" had been the only satisfaction she could get.

She found Gabrielle, worn out from a day of house-cleaning, lying on the love-seat in the living-room.

"We couldn't see Rene," Gabrielle volunteered.

A premonition of disaster swept over Julia. "Why not?" she asked, sinking into a chair.

"She's too sick." Gabrielle's voice stumbled. "No visitors allowed."

Julia felt a sudden, uncontrollable desire to cry. Although she fought the impulse with a swift hatred of its weakness, the fight was only partially successful. "If only I weren't so tired!" she excused herself, but she knew that it was her first encounter with defeat that sickened her.

She managed to ask in a taut voice, "What's wrong with Rene?"

"I don't know. Kit said she had to be kept absolutely quiet. He wouldn't even let ma see her."

Julia lashed out, "So your precious Kit isn't so omnipotent after all!"

"It's not Kit's fault," Gabrielle insisted stubbornly.

The front door banged. Footsteps clattered along the hall.

"Here's the grocery man!" sang Jimmy's voice. "When do we eat?"

His thin face peered around the edge of the living-room doorway. With quick perception he saw that something was wrong. "Well," he said, moving into full view, "what's everybody so glum about?"

Gabrielle repeated her news of Rene's condition.

"Gosh," said Jimmy. He dropped down on a footstool. "That's not so good, is it?"

"No, it's not. But"—and Gabrielle straightened weary shoulders—"I guess we can't help by sitting here mooning about it. How was business to-day—you guys?"

"All I did was run my legs off," Jimmy reported. "'Six cans of beans, a nickel's worth of onions——' 'How much are these strawberries, boy?' 'My, such small tomatoes——'" Jimmy wagged his head disparagingly. "If you ever want to see the female side of the race at its worst—its very worst—work in a grocery store!"

Gabrielle laughed. "Repeat from Mr. Coleman, I'll bet."

"Maybe so. But them's my sentiments."

He raised an eyebrow at Julia. "How about you, Miss Hoity-toity? Did the president of the First National give you his job?"

Julia gathered up her purse, gloves, and hat from her lap and stood up. "No," she said, and walked out of the room.

Anxious days followed, days that pivoted around the tiny flickering life in the immaculate bed at the South-western Hospital—hours that ground their way through the thick gloom and forced cheer of the Livingston home for three dark days and nights. On the fourth day Christopher Roberts relaxed his vigilance at Rene's bedside. The small girl opened seeing eyes and smiled tremulously at the doctor's familiar face. He returned the smile and watched the thin face ease into a natural, healing sleep.

Dinner became a celebration in the Livingstons' old dining-room that night. It was a late meal because James had been detained at the office until seven o'clock over a forgery brief. By the time the family sat down to roast beef and mashed potatoes, dusk had settled painstakingly over the city. Mary lighted the candles, and their flames brushed back the shadows. Even Julia shrugged herself out of her dejection at her failure to find work and presented a cheerful face at the table.

With eager hands Gabrielle accepted a filled plate from her father. "Gee," she said, "I feel so good I could eat two plates full."

"See that you do," James said. "We should fatten you up, anyway."

"Yeah," said Jimmy, "she wouldn't be worth much on the hoof the way she is."

Gabrielle grimaced at him and attacked her food vigorously.

"I baked some apple pies," Mary announced, beaming with pleasure over the restored appetites of her children. "You'd all better save room for them."

"It's a good thing you warned us," James said. "What'll you have, Larry?"

"Piece of bread."

"Please," suggested Julia.

"Please," mimicked Larry.

"My, I'm glad to-morrow's Sunday," Mary said with a sigh of satisfaction. "This has been a hectic week."

"You said it," Jimmy agreed. He shook his fork at the entire assemblage. "Hear ye, hear ye! If anybody dares to wake me up before ten o'clock, the commonwealth will think a pack of Indians are on the war-path."

"What about Sunday School?" asked Sue.

Jimmy glowered. "In case I didn't make myself clear—I said I was going to sleep. What's more, I intend to sleep. And the reason why—I've laboured all week. And when I say laboured, I mean laboured. 'Gimme a dime's worth of sugar.'"

"Now—please—don't tell us about the female of the species," exclaimed Julia good-naturedly. "I don't think I could bear it."

"By the way," Gabrielle said, turning suddenly to Julia. "Rufus Drake called. Before you got home. He said he'd call later."

"Rufus! That's a hick name," Jimmy commented.

Julia frowned. "He didn't name himself—that I know of."

"Well, you didn't name him," Jimmy retorted. "So what're you squawking about?"

David drowned Julia's reply with a demand for a "gravy lake" on his mashed potatoes.

James ate with satisfaction, relieved to see his family light-hearted again. The shadow of fear had touched even the youngest of his brood. As he listened to Jimmy's wisecracks, to Julia's sharp retorts, he knew that things were normal among them once more. He glanced towards the other end of the table where Mary sat, but found no response, no understanding. She was busy with the apple pie.

Much later that evening he sauntered into the library and mixed himself a whisky and soda. The younger members of the family had scattered for the night. Julia and Gabrielle were curled up on opposite ends of the sofa. Julia was reading, but Gabrielle was staring into the fire.

"Aren't you girls going to bed?" he asked.

"I'm too wide awake," Julia said.

"Me, too," chimed in Gabrielle.

James dragged the leather armchair up to the hearth. "By the way, Gabrielle, Kit wants to see you. About your voice. He wants you to 'phone him to-morrow."

"About my voice? What about my voice?"

"We didn't have time to discuss it."

Julia's eyes were narrowed over her book. "Maybe he's going to give you lessons."

"Kit! But Kit's a doctor!"

"Don't be stupid. I mean he'd pay for the lessons."

Gabrielle flushed. "Oh, he wouldn't——"

"And if he did?" questioned her father.

"I wouldn't let him—of course."

"Dear, dear," murmured Julia.

James ignored Julia. "Of course," he agreed with Gabrielle.

The fire sputtered against three minds.

Julia said thoughtfully, "I wonder why Kit never married?"

James lit a cigarette before he replied. "Our family comes into that. Years ago Kit was in love with your Aunt Gabrielle."

"Didn't she love him?" asked Gabrielle.

"For a time. Kit was in medical school with years of work ahead of him, and Elle lived for the present."

"And along came Uncle Raleigh," Julia continued.

"Exactly. He was quite a few years older than she. He was quite good-looking—attractive to women, I suppose you'd say. And he had plenty of money. So Elle married him."

"She did well by herself."

James looked quizzically at Julia. "Anyone who lets his head rule his heart usually does very well by himself."

"Oh, father, you don't really mean——" began Gabrielle.

"Of course he does," Julia cut in impatiently. "But don't bother your head about it. Your heart will always keep you running in circles."

"I don't see why——"

"Never mind, Gabrielle," James said kindly. "We're just built differently—your Aunt Elle and I, you and Julia. Julia, for instance, will always weigh the pros and cons of everything before she acts. You will act first and think about it afterward. You're impulsive and warm-hearted. Julia is cold and calculating."

Julia listened with acute resentment. "You make me sound pretty disagreeable," she said.

James smiled an acknowledgment. "You are—more often than

not. You'll need a front, my dear, if you're not to defeat your own ends."

A scowl darkened Julia's eyes. "There are lots of things I need."

"Relax a little first," James advised. "Think calmly. You worry your mind—like a dog with a bone."

Anger seared Julia's cheeks. "You contradict yourself."

"No, I don't think so. Thoughts and actions are two different things."

James picked up the *Beacon* that lay on the table near his chair. "I haven't even read the funnies yet."

Gabrielle grinned at him companionably, but Julia seemed not to have heard her father's remark. She muttered, "Background and no money. Well, at least I have something to start with."

"What are you going to start with background?" inquired Gabrielle mischievously.

"I don't know," snapped Julia, the futility of her days of job hunting blistering her spirit. "But something—you can just bet on that."

"Julia——" James regarded her blandly over the top of the newspaper. "You have an appalling lack of humour. If you don't do something about it, you'll never set the world on fire."

Perhaps it was just as well that Mary opened the library door at that moment.

"Aren't you ever coming to bed?" she asked. "It's almost twelve-thirty."

Before she undressed that night, Julia set a match to the wood laid in the white fireplace of the bedroom she shared with Gabrielle. "Another extravagance," she said. "All these fireplaces."

"But they're nice," said Gabrielle, shivering out of her clothes.

"They're nice all right, but nobody else has fireplaces in every room. We could do without them, too, only we're so used to putting wood in them and lighting the fires any time we need to that it's almost a ritual."

She rose from her knees and began to unfasten the snaps on her dress.

"I hope there's some hot water," Gabrielle said. She wrapped herself in a faded red robe and thrust her feet into worn red slippers.

"This late!" scoffed Julia.

Gabrielle's optimism proved unwarranted. The girls washed sketchily and dashed back to their room. Gabrielle dived into bed and snuggled into the pillow. Julia raised a window and turned

out the lights. The firelight flickered over the room, tracing shadows on the walls, pushing back the cold, wet night that crept in at the window.

"I hope it'll be a nice day to-morrow," Julia said, pulling the blankets up to her chin. "I hate a rainy Sunday."

Gabrielle mumbled drowsily. In a few minutes her quiet, regular breathing told Julia she was asleep.

To Julia, sleep came less easily. Her dreams were waking. She was reaching out towards the future. There would be a place for her in the world of achievement, she felt sure. There must be. She had reached a milepost in her life that marked the way between yesterday and to-morrow. As yet, she could not read the definite direction to which it pointed, but that the direction was there she could not doubt.

She heard her father come upstairs. Her mother's voice complained in the hall. Gradually the house grew still, settled into a silence that travelled deep into wilderness.

The room in which Julia lay held fast the memories of its own eventful past. The second Julia must have planned her future carefully from this same maple bed, must have dreamed the dreams that visited the modern Julia to-night as she sought a practical plan for her future.

Only, the early Julia would have thought in terms of marriage, not of a career. In the years between 1827 and 1880, when she lived, there were few things a girl could do but marry. Yet she had been slow to make up her mind. Gabrielle Le Duc was twenty-one when she married the first James, but her daughter Julia was older than that. She was married from the present house, which was built in 1851. By the standards of the day she and Gabrielle must have been virtually old maids, reflected Julia.

"Maybe she was like me," Julia thought. "She knew what she wanted and waited for it. Only I'm not going to wait for it," she decided, turning her back on the flickering firelight, "I'm going out after it."

GABRIELLE spent Sunday afternoon with Kit, who picked her up at her home after his afternoon round of hospital calls. She seemed very young in the short white dress Mary had fashioned from an old one of Julia's.

"I wish—just once," Gabrielle had said when the dress was nearing completion, "I could have something that wasn't a left-over."

But to-day she was pleased with the dress. She was pleased with all things. She was exorbitantly happy, a spring of laughter bubbling from her contentment.

Kit suggested a ride, and Gabrielle accepted eagerly. "Could we go to Winston? Where we used to live?"

"You and Lindbergh," Kit teased.

Gabrielle's "we" included five generations of Livingstons. Literally, it applied only to James Livingston I who had settled with his bride on the Fort Anthony reservation when it was a hamlet of traders and *voyageurs*, and there was not a day that he was not reminded of the predominant interest of the white people of the territory in the acquisition of the lands occupied by the Sioux Indians, lying west of the Mississippi River. These were known to be rich in minerals and in soil, to be well timbered and watered by rivers and lakes—truly a paradise of rolling prairies and gentle slopes, of wooded hill-tops, luxuriant natural meadows and an abundance of the purest water.

On this Sunday, more than a hundred years after the building of the log house, another Gabrielle stood on the outskirts of its yard and viewed with a sense of personal loss the nondescript white house that had replaced the old home of Gabrielle Le Duc and the first James.

Unfortunately the log house had burned down a year after James had built his stone house on the desolate land which was now a central part of the city of Riverside.

"Otherwise," Gabrielle said, "it might have been kept up like the Lorillard House."

Kit nodded. He had been associated so long with the Livingstons that their regrets became his own, even the real but transient nostalgia of the child Gabrielle.

Overlooking Lake Arthur, Kit's apartment awaited them in cool

and spacious comfort. His aunt and housekeeper, Sarah Vail, led them to the long sun-room, where she served them glasses of orange juice, clinking with ice, bobbing with cherries.

Sarah was a subdued, tidily dressed woman in her middle fifties. Because her married life had been a stormy failure, she had gratefully accepted her nephew's suggestion that she take over the management of his apartment. She had fitted in harmoniously and Kit had been most generous in payment. She had an ample allowance both for her household and personal expenses.

Sarah's life was as well-ordered as her dress. With one exception. Beyond the retreat in her large dark eyes, behind the resigned curve of her mouth, peering through the keyholes in the far closets of her mind, lurked the determination, the ruling desire of the "terrible meek." But to-day her lulled voice held no calling as she chatted with Gabrielle. Yet there was weariness behind her almost certain knowledge that Gabrielle was important to Kit.

Kit came abruptly to the reason for Gabrielle's visit. "Are you taking voice lessons now?" he asked her.

"Not this summer."

"But you have been?"

"Off and on. Whenever father could afford it."

"From whom?" asked Sarah.

"Anastasia Cooper."

Sarah's trim eyebrows lifted disparagingly. "Anastasia Cooper? I don't believe I've ever heard of her."

"Miss Cooper has a good reputation," Gabrielle said somewhat tartly.

"Would you be interested in changing teachers?" asked Kit.

"To a better one? Of course."

Kit proceeded cautiously. "Have you ever heard of Paul Dumas?"

Gabrielle's body became still, her breath held in suspension. "Yes," she said.

"He's a friend of mine," Kit went on pleasantly. He knocked tobacco from a pipe into an ash-tray. "In fact, he was studying music in Vienna while I was there."

"Yes," said Gabrielle in the same hushed voice.

Kit frowned, a brief acknowledgment of Sarah's tense posture. Could that stiffness signify disapproval?

"He's just returned from a trip to France. You know he moves about all over, although his roots are here. Vienna, Milan, Paris, New York. And then when he's tired of trail wandering, he comes

home. And he always knows a little more than he did before, and is a still better teacher. You know his house, don't you, Gabrielle? You know he's turned out the best of pupils. But he won't be bothered unless he thinks you have something and are willing to work. I've been thinking a lot about your music lately. You've reached an age where you ought to be taken in hand—if you're going to do anything with it. And I don't mean in an amateur way. I mean the whole thing, for I think you have talent, Gabrielle. I'm no musician, but I used to listen a lot when I was in Vienna, and I couldn't help absorbing some critical standards from Dumas. Well, I called him up last night and talked to him about you. I told him I thought you had definite possibilities. He was interested, as he always is in a voice that shows promise. In short, he said he'd like to hear you sing. This coming week."

Gabrielle's face was alight with joy, but her fingers bit deep into her handkerchief. "But, Kit, he'll be awfully expensive."

"One always has to pay for good things," Sarah reminded her.

Kit broke in quickly, "Whatever his price, Gabrielle, an audition won't cost you anything. And Dumas isn't hipped on fees. Music is his hobby, his passion—almost his life. He doesn't think of it in terms of money."

"Did you say anything about this to father?" Gabrielle asked.

"No, I'll leave that to you. But the appointment is made—for Monday evening at seven. You'll keep it, of course?"

Gabrielle's cheeks were pale. Her dark eyes looked enormous. "I'll keep it," she promised.

Gabrielle had dinner with Kit and Sarah, a delicious, daintily served meal which she was too excited to eat. It was nearly eight o'clock when Kit dropped her off at her own gate on his way to the hospital. Gabrielle went at once in search of her father. She found him sleeping over a book in the library. She called to him and shook his arm lightly. He awoke without effort, as quietly as a child might come from sleep.

"Hello, Gabrielle." He laid the book on the table. "Did you have a nice day?"

"Wonderful." Excitement trembled through her voice, burned through her body like a flame. "Father, Paul Dumas wants to hear me sing." Mechanically she sat down on the chair James pulled up for her.

"Tell me about it," James said, and thought with unreasonable pain, "She's grown up—all in an afternoon. This dream of hers has touched reality and has taken her childhood from her."

James had only mildly believed in the promise of Gabrielle's voice. Mary had thought it nonsense, but Kit had listened attentively, and the range and beauty of her voice had been noticed at school and by Anastasia Cooper. But now, all through Gabrielle's recital, while one part of his mind registered her words, the other part kept repeating, "Now she's one of us. One of the army of grown-ups who must find that all stories don't have happy endings."

When she had finished talking, he said to her, taking her small hot hands in his, "No matter what he charges, Gabrielle, you shall have lessons from him."

To-night she had gone beyond counting the cost. In the morning she would remember, if only at her mother's instigation, for Mary refused to let any member of her family forget that bills had to be paid. But now she said, her eyes shining, "Thank you, father. Oh, thank you, father."

When Gabrielle told of her coming audition at breakfast, only Julia was impressed.

"Who's Paul Dumas?" Mary wanted to know.

"One of the best voice teachers in the country," Gabrielle informed her.

"The very best, you mean," elaborated Julia.

"Then it's foolishness for you to go to him," Mary declared. "He'll charge too much."

James buttered a piece of toast. "We'll see about that," he said.

"It's always a dollar here and a dollar there," Mary complained bitterly. "No wonder we never have enough money."

"If Gabrielle intends to go into the voice business," Julia pointed out, "it's going to cost plenty."

Gabrielle blew into a brief anger. "Why don't you all hold your horses! You don't know how much it's going to cost."

James came to her support. "Gabrielle's right. A decision now would be a little premature. But if she has a voice worth developing, she'll go into the voice business—as you so aptly put it, Julia—come hell or high water. Now let's hear no more about it until Paul Dumas has had his say."

Authority quickened James' voice, silenced further comment. After a few minutes' silence born of sullen acceptance of his decree, breakfast proceeded peacefully. It was rarely that he took this tone with any

of his children, but when he did even his wife's grumbings were stilled.

Mary looked at her second daughter with sharp concern. Her family never ceased to surprise her. It was the Livingston blood coming out in them—the long rolling echoes from these strange men and women whose faces stared down at her from the walls and made her oddly uncomfortable at times. Her own inheritance could not have been more prosaic. She was one of seven children, all of whom had conformed to the standards fixed by their father, a small merchant who had been glad to see his daughter marry a Livingston, but in the end had felt sorry for her in her inadequacy.

At first Mary had tried to live up to the social traditions of the family. She had been invited to the homes of the best people, had entertained in return, had joined the clubs and organizations suggested by James, had made the most of the family connections. But her efforts had been fumbling and inept. Soon the standards of cold social appraisal had swept her out of view. Then a spate of children, the endless routine of their upbringing, the dwindling fortune, the constant demands of a home that required the most loving care had swamped her altogether. James still lunched downtown with his old family friends, but their wives had forgotten that Mary existed. And her children were not on familiar terms with theirs because private schools were beyond their means, and their hours of leisure followed a pattern of work, either at home or at part-time jobs.

Mary regretted none of it, but she knew that James did, while Julia was a constant thorn in her flesh, with the sharpness of her reproach. But Gabrielle had been a measure of consolation to her. Although they had little actual companionship, Gabrielle was usually soft and gentle, winged but briefly with temper. Mary studied her across the table now—her dark eyes glowing with suppressed excitement. But she could not picture Gabrielle on the concert platform, Gabrielle set aloof by the strange magic of talent. Her sweet young voice would turn out to be commonplace, she felt sure, and Gabrielle would remain her familiar and docile daughter.

With reproach on her placid face she looked at James, as mysterious to her now as on the day she married him. All the family unrest seemed to flow from him, so that her children were like strangers to her. But she had never felt this way about Gabrielle until now. She had expected comfort from this slim, dark-eyed child, if from none of the others.

With a baffled expression, Mary rose from the table. She had

mothered a vigorous brood who sheered away from her and clung to their father, except when their stomachs ached or they wanted to be fed. They all seemed charmed by his blithe approach to life. It surely hadn't been worth her while to serve them all so faithfully. Only yesterday she had overheard Jimmy describe her to Julia as a grumbling old bore. In a rare flash of insight Mary saw that this perhaps was the trouble. James had enjoyed them, entertained them, dazzled them with the Livingston aura. She had brought them up.

5

AN ebony-faced Negress opened the door of Paul Dumas' house to Gabrielle. "I have an appointment with Mr. Dumas," Gabrielle said. "Yes, ma'm." The Negress let her into the hall. "I'll tell Mr. Dumas you're here." She lumbered up the wide oak stairs.

While she waited, Gabrielle admired her surroundings. The panelled-oak hall gave on to an enormous living-room. Gabrielle glimpsed a beamed ceiling, the dark, rich blue of a rug, two great stone fireplaces and deep sofas close to them. She had often noticed the brown brick manor set back in its own grounds and had mused over it because she knew it to be the home of Paul Dumas.

Clumping footsteps distracted her attention. A black face peered at her over the balustrade. "You c'n come right up to the music-room, Miss."

Gabrielle ran up the stairs and followed the Negress to an open door.

"Go on in," the woman said, and Gabrielle edged past her starched skirts. Later she was to remember the room—more femininely keyed than the one downstairs—its turquoise draperies, its subdued yellow chairs, its shelved walls—but at the moment she saw only Paul Dumas.

She wondered instantly if she had imagined him at all because he was entirely foreign to her mind. Gabrielle's conception of the true maestro was naively grounded on the stock pattern—the long hair and unconventional manners that she had seen exhibited on the concert platform. Her surprise was almost breath-taking as she faced Dumas. She was conscious at once of his height, the broad shoulders and

narrow hips, the crisp grey hair that accentuated sharp features and matched his eyes, keen with appraisal as they watched her. She had been prepared for a measure of affectation, but his approach was one of complete sincerity.

"So you are Gabrielle." His chiselled mouth softened into a smile as he held out his hand.

"I'm Gabrielle." She smiled shyly at him, laying her hand in his.

Dumas offered her one of the yellow chairs. He took a carved armchair opposite her.

"Christopher tells me you have an extraordinary voice."

Gabrielle was intensely conscious of his scrutiny. But she answered quietly, "Well, I sing. Miss Cooper—I took lessons from her—told me my voice was good. Mr. Grieg—at school—always said so, too. But Kit is the only one who's ever said it was better than that."

"And isn't he a good judge?"

Gabrielle shrugged thin shoulders. "I don't know. He's never studied music."

Dumas' right eyebrow shot upward. "Perhaps not. Yet he has a good ear. One doesn't have to study the technicalities of music to appreciate its quality."

"You shouldn't—encourage me so—— The disappointment will be worse——"

Dumas interrupted, "Don't look for disappointment, Gabrielle. You can't be a pessimist and come out on top of the heap. Encouragement is cheap at half its price. Whether you have an exceptional voice or not, you must certainly have a good voice. That in itself is a delight. Tell me—how old are you?"

"I'll be fifteen in December."

"Fifteen—— You seem older. Not that you look it——" and he repeated softly, "but you do seem older."

"I suppose I do," Gabrielle agreed cheerfully. "We grow up fast in our family."

Dumas smiled. He knew the Livingston tradition well. And he had heard from Christopher how the *ménage* was run by the present generation. Strange how these abundant, impecunious families often turned out talent, particularly in the world of music. But it could easily be smothered from sheer diffusion of interest. "Time is here and now," he told Gabrielle seriously. "Don't let to-morrow run away with you."

As Gabrielle made no reply, Dumas rose and, moving more like an athlete than a musician, crossed to the piano.

Instinctively Gabrielle's muscles tightened.

"Shall I play something for you?" Dumas asked.

Gabrielle relaxed. "Oh, yes, please do."

"Have you a favourite?"

She thought for a moment. "Do you know the *Skaters' Waltz*?"

Fascinated, she watched Dumas' strong, moving fingers. Music flowed from them, washed out each tightly curled nerve, flooded her entire body with sound.

After the *Skaters' Waltz*, he played Mendelssohn's *Spring Song* with delicacy and understanding as if it came created from his own thoughts. Clarity unfolded Gabrielle's mind. Perfection was in this man and, consequently, in this house, in this room. Even when the music stopped, she felt it to be so. She sought no reason.

Dumas turned to her. "Would you like to sing for me, Gabrielle?" She walked over to the piano.

"What is it going to be?" he asked.

"I thought—Schubert's *Ave Maria*."

"Good." He played the introduction.

Then she followed him, lifting her voice into the lovely words.

When she had finished, Paul Dumas said quietly, "Sing that again, Gabrielle."

She was a little frightened at that, but the introduction quieted her fears. Effortlessly, truly, she sang the song once more. This time when she finished, he was silent for a moment. Then he said, "Do you know what you have, Gabrielle?"

Her hands pushed back her hair. "Something?"

"Something, indeed! The spark that lights a torch."

She was speechless, unbelieving.

"You can take my word for it, Gabrielle. You're young, but the quality is there. I've heard many voices and I've done what I could with some of them. And I'll do what I can with yours. But"—his eyes held a bright intensity—"you should go beyond me. No one but yourself can stop you. I haven't often been able to say that to a pupil, and I want you to understand that a voice without temperament and industry will get you nowhere. I repeat—no one but yourself can stop you."

A few pointed questions evoked all he needed to know about her previous training.

"Forget it all," he said. "We'll go slowly into voice technique. For one year—perhaps two—we'll rest your voice instead of training

it. I shall give you simple daily exercises. Beyond that, I want you to sing as little as possible. That will be hard, with a voice like yours, but it's most important. I shall expect you to stick to this rule, for a young voice is easily strained. Perhaps you know that Jenny Lind lost her voice completely for four years."

He paused thoughtfully, then asked abruptly, "You've studied piano?"

"For six years."

"Good. Very good indeed. Accompanying yourself will keep you in practice. Now—while we're dealing lightly with your voice, I want you to learn French, Italian, Spanish, German, perhaps even a little Russian."

"All those?" gasped Gabrielle.

"All those," echoed Dumas firmly. "But they will come with time. Each step will take care of itself. For the present, you must put yourself entirely in my hands. Your voice must be mine as well as your own."

"I feel really honoured," Gabrielle said, as his grey eyes rested on her with friendly dismissal.

The memory of Dumas' words kept Gabrielle company all the way home. Their promise shone in her eyes, echoed in her smile. On the street-car, people stared at her curiously. But Gabrielle missed their glances. In this one hour she had all the extravagant, confident dreams of youth. Their triumph was an armour; their vision a shield. This was her moment of expectancy which no fulfilment could equal.

Yet, when she reached home, some instinct kept her from repeating Dumas' praise. Her encounter with the voice teacher would sound grey and lifeless by the time the family had wolfed it. She was glad that the younger children had gone to bed. Only her mother, Julia and Jimmy waited for her in the living-room.

Mechanically she answered her mother's questions. "Yes, I sang for him. Yes, he liked my voice."

"Well, what did he say about it?"

The words stuck in her throat and she caught Julia's narrowed glance. "That—that it was good," she managed at last.

"What eloquence! What enthusiasm!" exclaimed Jimmy.

"Are you going to take lessons from him?" asked Julia.

"Father said I could."

Mary broke a length of thread from a spool of darning-cotton. "What does he charge?"

Gabrielle braced herself. "Four dollars an hour." For the moment, her triumph dimmed.

Mary's hands dropped to her lap. "Four dollars! And you think you're going to take lessons from him? What do you think we are? Millionaires?"

Jimmy whistled. "Gee, cripes, he must rake in the dough."

"And I'll bet that's a reduction," Julia put in silkily.

"A reduction!" cried Gabrielle. "What do you mean by that?"

"Kit sent you, didn't he?"

"You mean Kit's paying the rest of it?" Mary asked. "Why doesn't he pay for it all then? He can well afford to."

Gabrielle sprang to her feet. Anger burned across her cheeks. "Kit's not paying for it! I'll not have anybody paying for me——"

"Don't tell me *you're* going to pay for it," Julia interposed.

"Father will——"

"Your father can't keep clothes on our backs, let alone spending four dollars for foolishness," Mary stormed. "Neither can we eat your father's liquor or your singing——"

James' calm voice broke through the high-pitched tirade. He had come in unobserved. "What has my liquor got to do with Gabrielle's singing?"

In the silence that blanketed the room, James' dark eyes missed no facial reflection of thought. "Well?"

Gabrielle recognized his quiet anger. She explained, "It's about Mr. Dumas' lessons——"

"Come into the library, Gabrielle. I want to hear what he had to say."

When she sank down on the library sofa, Gabrielle was parrying tears. "They spoiled it all," she said.

James sat down beside her. "It's an old family custom," he said consolingly, putting an arm around her. "Suppose you forget their giggling part of it and tell me what came before."

This time Gabrielle let herself go. All the joy that had been damned up in her since coming home was let loose. James was the audience she needed. He understood her excitement as she recalled the room, the music, and, above all—and her voice hushed over them—Dumas' promises.

When she had finished, he snapped open a cigarette-case and selected a cigarette. Behind the flame of a match, his smile showed profound content.

"Well, Gabrielle," he said, "I guess marriage is all right after all. Quite all right."

"Marriage?"

He nodded. "Yes, marriage. If two people like your mother and me can produce a miracle, then I have nothing against matrimony."

He glanced up at the painting of Gabrielle Le Duc, the silent witness to all his joys and sorrows. "But I think you can thank her," he observed. "Her voice was said to be as lovely as her face. And trained, too."

Had she stayed in France the first Gabrielle would have continued to study music, but in Minnesota babies, ill-health, and the rigours of pioneer life awaited her. And her voice had contented itself singing lullabies to her son James, to the second Julia and the second Gabrielle.

The child, Gabrielle, looked up into the still face of her ancestor, totally aware, for the first time, of her own share in the family heritage.

6

JULIA was hustled back into the academic atmosphere with her first job. Miss Lola Wilson sent her to West River College to apply for a temporary post in the filing department of the Registrar's office. She told her it might last a week or all summer, but that it would be good experience for her. She was to see Howard Renville, the Registrar, on the first floor of the Administration building.

Julia had always admired the extensive, terraced lawns that surrounded the numerous red brick colonial buildings of West River. The college was Presbyterian, originally endowed by the private fortune of Daniel Hanover, a rowdy, hell-raising lumberman, who in the pain-racked months of his last illness had conceived the idea of an educational institution. "To perpetuate my memory," he told his lawyer, "and to keep me out of hell."

He had reverted to the religion of his father and his own childhood. When an architect drew up the plans for the college, Hanover, from his bed, had labelled them "West River Presbyterian College." Before he died, excavation had begun on the banks of the Mississippi.

Forty years later West River College housed a thriving community of young men and women from all over the state. It had a number of

non-resident students, too, but being a private institution with comparatively high tuition fees, its enrolment was necessarily limited.

Julia passed the statue of Daniel Hanover that centred the campus and entered the Administration building, whose front doors gave upon a small, meticulously kept park. The information clerk in the Registrar's office ushered her into Howard Renville's private office.

Julia found herself sitting across the desk from a slender, fastidiously groomed man whose age she guessed to be about forty. Renville was tall, faintly feminine in appearance. He had a sallow skin, but his features were definite. His eyes were a penetrating blue, his lips narrow, harshly drawn. Black hair waved neatly away from a high forehead.

Julia felt suddenly young and ill at ease. Renville's all-enveloping gaze held her prisoner for a moment before he spoke. His voice was rather loud, distinctly imperious.

"I need someone to help out in the filing department for the entire summer. The rate of pay is forty cents an hour. We'll teach you our filing systems, our mail procedure, and as many of the office functions as it will be necessary for you to know. If your work is satisfactory, we'll keep you. If not, of course, we won't."

His silence struck Julia in the face. "I think," she murmured, "my work will be satisfactory."

Renville smiled, an automatic movement of the lips that left Julia feeling chilled and uncertain. "Then I'll expect you in the morning at eight-thirty. You can report to me here."

Julia walked out of the office as if she were blown by a steady wind. Her legs seemed to move without her volition. The campus, deserted, basking in the sun, seemed—somehow—unlovely. "I don't want to work here," she thought. "I don't want to work for that man!"

As she passed through the high gate, relief and the swift return of her breathing powers caused Julia to slacken her footsteps and to laugh, although uncertainly, at the nameless, pulsing warning that hummed in her ears. "How silly!" she chided herself. "How utterly absurd to feel so funny about a filing job!"

When she reached home, she gave the family the barest details of the new position. She did not mention Renville at all. The family made little comment. Her advent into the business world, she surmised, seemed a puny effort to them after the tremendous vista of Gabrielle's musical future. But Jimmy, as usual, struck a sensitive nerve with his penetrating wisecrack. "Filing!" he hooted, and then enunciated maddeningly, "Miss Julia Livingston, file clerk. And

what do you intend to do, Miss Livingston? File your way into the eyes of the world? "

Julia did not linger with the rest of the family that evening. She could not endure the possibility that anyone might realize how sudden and jolting a landing her experimental wings had given her. She took her pride and her hurt upstairs with her.

When Gabrielle, greatly excited but oddly poised, left their room in a whirlwind of disorder for her voice lesson with Paul Dumas, Julia closed the door on the rest of the house.

There were not many times, she reminded herself as she picked up a discarded slip and stockings and went on to straighten the dressing-table, that she envied Gabrielle her voice. She had listened to it often, had, indeed, conceded its pleasing quality. The possibility of its greatness had never entered her mind.

But to-night——

Julia screwed the top on a bottle of Cologne. "What if it is good—exceptional even? It'll cost a fortune to develop it—even for the concert stage. Let alone opera."

Her spirits picked up a little then dropped precipitately. "But she's got it anyway. She's got the anticipation, the eagerness. The means to an end." She thought—almost with desperation at the very ineffectualness of her thinking, "If I had that voice, nothing on God's earth would stop me from reaching whatever goal I wanted."

Julia stared at herself in the mirror, and the glass caught her tears and pictured them in fantastic form. A swaggering fate had passed her by. He had left her a menial, but to Gabrielle he had given his cloak.

7

PAUL DUMAS closed Gabrielle's exercise note-book and laid it on the piano. He had been testing her possibilities and had come to some definite conclusions about her. In spite of the fact that he had not gone far enough with Gabrielle yet to know to the full just what she needed, he was slowly piecing together the puzzle of her large and picturesque family, and the clash of interest that surrounded her night and day. Evidently she had no time to herself—and this was bound

to hamper her artistic development. It was showing already in her lack of concentrated purpose—due, he felt sure, to genuine fatigue. He had no wish to segregate her, to rigidly control her life. He believed that common ordinary living built voices as well as character. But he tolerated no physical lassitude in any of his pupils.

Dumas had lived his own life with as shared a devotion as he was able between music and the daily living that surrounded him. Of course, his studies and his travel had all been directed toward musical education. He had never been able to participate in gregarious living because of the demands of his talent but, except during his student days, he had never allowed his music to exclude his delight or his interest in either people or events.

He realized, however, that all students of music had neither the stamina nor the will to merge the æsthetic and the material. Although Gabrielle's genius might flourish in the vigorous atmosphere of her large and ill-assorted family, her obvious physical weaknesses and her curiously sentient personality made careful direction imperative. She needed character guidance as much as she did tuition, and the opening up of definite intellectual channels. She was only a schoolgirl and not a very well-informed one at that. But the paramount issue, at the moment, and Dumas believed in taking moments as they came, was her bodily health.

"I'm afraid we'll have to discontinue your lessons for a while; Gabrielle," he told her gently.

Gabrielle started. "Discontinue!" Fear tightened her throat. "My voice—why, I've barely got started."

"Don't be alarmed," he reassured her. "There's nothing serious the matter with your voice."

"But something is."

"Definitely. It's as fatigued as you are. For you're desperately tired, aren't you, my dear?"

Gabrielle sat down abruptly. "Yes, I'm awfully tired."

"A voice is a very delicate instrument. It shouldn't be strained—any more than the body should be. Physical fatigue reacts on the voice. Even in the few exercises I've given you, you've been forcing your voice, just as you've been forcing your arms and legs to move, your lips to speak."

Aware of her growing dismay, Dumas broke off his explanations. "Excuse me a minute." He crossed the room, pulled the bell-rope and returned to the piano bench.

"Sit in the yellow chair, Gabrielle," he suggested. "It's most comfortable. I'll have Sadie bring us tea."

He clasped his hands around his crossed knees and leaned against the keyboard. He watched Gabrielle's fingers slacken on the chair arms. He saw her eyelids droop. "No one so young," he thought with a sense of shock, "should have cause for such utter exhaustion."

Sadie's entrance startled Gabrielle into tense posture.

"You wanted me, Mr. Dumas?"

"Will you bring us tea, Sadie? And those chocolate cakes you baked to-day. Lots of them."

When Sadie had ambled out of the room, Dumas allowed Gabrielle to relax for a few minutes before he began to speak.

"We've got along very well, Gabrielle," he told her. "To go back to the beginning is no small task for someone who has already covered a certain amount of groundwork. But—I'll be frank to say I don't like or agree with Anastasia Cooper's methods."

"Fortunately, your breathing is instinctively correct. That's all to the good. In these few weeks you've been with me, you've done remarkably well with your tone placement. You remember I told you in the beginning that I'd give you only the simplest exercises. You can't rush a voice to perfection. Besides, I've not yet been able to classify your voice. I want to be sure——"

Gabrielle's eyes widened with surprise. "But I was sure I was a soprano. I——"

Dumas laughed. "But there are different kinds of sopranos—lyric, dramatic, mezzo, coloratura. You're not quite fifteen. Your voice may mature in a year; perhaps in two years. Then we'll place you correctly. Until then any strain—too many high notes, too much singing—might ruin the quality of your voice. Don't lose sight of that, Gabrielle. That's why I want you to avoid singing at all for a year or so. And now—for the next month I want you to rest—mentally, physically. Completely. No more exercises. No more piano. No work of any kind. Will you do that, Gabrielle?"

"I can stop singing and playing the piano," Gabrielle replied, "but I have to go to school. I have to help at home."

"You haven't much choice about school. But how much do you do at home, anyway?"

She sighed. "Everything. The house is so big ma can't possibly do all the work. There's so much cleaning. Then there are nine of us. That means stacks of dishes."

"It should also mean lots of help."

"It doesn't. Julia works, so that lets her out. Jimmy does little. Like getting wood for the fireplaces." She laughed. "Do you know, we have a fireplace in every single room, Mr. Dumas? And wood is kept in every one!"

"Good heavens! In the kitchen too, I'll wager."

"Oh, a big one in the kitchen. It's an old house—that's why."

Sudden warmth suffused Dumas' understanding of Gabrielle. His earlier deductions had been accurate but tempered with no personal feeling. He welcomed the arrival of the tea things so that he could serve her fragrant, steaming tea in blue pottery cups. He urged her to eat the cup cakes, heavy with fudge frosting, as if she were a hungry child.

After two cups of tea, colour slid into Gabrielle's cheeks. She seemed less tense. "Your place is so restful," she said, setting her cup carefully on the tea-table. "Ours isn't. Unless you're alone in a room."

Dumas' grey eyes were thoughtful. "You're an obedient pupil, Gabrielle. You have put your future in my hands with an absolute faith I have encountered only once before. Now, here's what I want you to do." He looked at her expectantly.

"Yes?"

"Go home to your parents. Tell them you're tired, that you're losing weight. Tell them you must have rest and plenty of it. Then, every Friday night, as usual, I want you to spend an hour here. We'll talk, read—anything you like. I think it will be good for both of us."

A pleased smile curved Gabrielle's mouth. "I'd like that."

"After the month is up, we'll continue with your lessons. We'll start you in French, and widen the field as we go along."

The thought of all the languages he had mentioned disturbed Gabrielle. "It's going to take a long time," she sighed.

He shrugged. "But you're asking for a lot, Gabrielle. You have to put into your voice training what you expect to get out of it." He crumpled his napkin. "And now, I'll drive you home. Oh, don't protest. It's no trouble at all."

On the way home Gabrielle was filled with a deep sense of repose she always had after she had been with Dumas for an hour. He was curiously restful to her, in spite of all the implied force of their future work together. Perhaps it was his intense appraisal of the day and the hour that was rather than the constant climbing of tomorrow's heights that kept her mind at ease, her thoughts in the middle way instead of verging off on unknown tangents. She knew

that when the time came he would not be easy with her, but would insist on the maximum effort. But if he could let the future take care of itself, so could she. And yet—because she was far less tutored in restraint than Dumas, for the moment she wished that she had Julia's intense drive to achieve an end. That and Julia's enormous physical capacity for work were what she needed that she could build her own ramparts and not let her energies be spent in countless small effects.

That Dumas' compulsion to-night would cause a battle royal in her household she had every reason to believe. No work, no singing at all—— A smile brushed her lips as she thought of Jimmy, who scoffed at her mildly for wasting her time and the family money. It irritated him that she didn't even sing any more. "Once a lark, now a mute," he teased her. "Except for that horrible *do re mi*."

The restrictions Dumas had put on her singing were hard to bear, for instinctively melody welled up in her as she went about her tasks. She had always sung with a spontaneity that would not be denied. Now for the first time in her life she felt the binding strings of discipline.

Only her father understood, although sometimes fear nagged her that his attitude was one of kindly forbearance rather than faith in her ultimate goal. Ma quite frankly thought it silly nonsense, and told her so over and over again as they handed plates back and forth to be washed and dried, as they baked pies and made beds together.

Suddenly Gabrielle's tired faculties rebelled. She closed her eyes to the lights dancing on the windscreen and refused to emerge beyond Dumas' casual conversation for the rest of the drive.

Except for the night-lamp in the hall, Gabrielle found the house dark and deserted when she reached home. This was a relief, as she dreaded conversation or argument in her present frame of mind. Slowly, conscious of the effort of lifting her feet and putting them down, she climbed the stairs to her room.

The next day was Saturday and Gabrielle awoke to the black realization of the hours of work ahead of her. Then she remembered Dumas' ultimatum. Her mouth tightened grimly as she sat up in bed. It wasn't going to be easy to make the family understand.

She glanced at Julia and frowned distastefully. Julia had got a permanent wave, and her hair lay in fuzzy disorder over her pillow. She couldn't stand the sight of Julia to-day. She wanted to get away from them all.

Gabrielle's thoughts veered from point to point. Slow footsteps

in the hall evoked the picture of her mother, a bath-robe girdled around her heavy body, trudging towards breakfast.

Gabrielle sighed, "If only I could stay here!" But habit was too strong for her. Automatically she got up, hoping she could get away before Julia awoke, so that she wouldn't have to talk to her. Besides, ma would be expecting her to help with breakfast, and there was no escape from that. The concert platform seemed a million miles away to Gabrielle as she drew on her slip, ran a comb through her curling dark hair. The passing moments trapped her in their dull routine. Perhaps her family was right. Perhaps she had nothing more than any other girl at school—than Daisy Masters, or Ellen Leffingwell, or Matilda Ruders.

In fifteen minutes she was in the kitchen setting the table. It was typical of the family that they dined in state by candle-light in their lovely old dining-room but had breakfast in the kitchen. It was like their jobs, their clothes, their friends, and everything about them—a mass of contradictions.

Gabrielle had the knack of making even a breakfast-table attractive. Her mother slammed dishes into place, stood the milk-bottle on the table, disregarded saucers. These lapses coincided with her bath-robe, her disregard of appearances in the interest of convenience. But Gabrielle applied a knowing touch and softened the rough edges of her mother's carelessness without giving her offence.

As she placed slices of bread on the broiler rack, Gabrielle asked pleasantly, "Did you and father go out last night?"

Mary stirred oatmeal into a pan of boiling water. "We went to a movie."

At that moment James entered the kitchen. "Good morning," he said. "My, it's nice and warm in here."

Gabrielle smiled at him over the bottle of milk she was opening.

"Good morning, father. Breakfast isn't quite ready yet."

"Mark it on the wall! I'm early. What's on the menu?"

"Oatmeal," Mary replied. "Toast and eggs."

"Good." James sat down at the table. "How was the lesson, Gabrielle?"

"Just a minute." Gabrielle turned over the bread on the rack.

"Well," she said, closing the broiler door, "I can't sing any more."

"What!" cried Mary. She retrieved the spoon she had dropped in the oatmeal.

"Oh, not for good. For a month."

"What's the reason?" James asked.

Gabrielle drew a deep breath. She did not look at her mother. "Mr. Dumas said I was too tired—physically; that my voice was as tired as my body. He said that I should have a rest before I took any more lessons."

She pulled toast from the broiler and quickly refilled the rack.

James scrutinized Gabrielle's body, stretching too slenderly into young womanhood. For the first time he noticed the hollows in her cheeks, the transparent thinness of her hands as she buttered toast. "Suppose you follow Dumas' orders," he suggested. "Rest. Plenty of sleep." He reached out to touch her arm. "Good Lord, child! You're just like a wafer. I hadn't noticed."

"Chocolate or vanilla?" wondered Gabrielle.

Mary went on ladling oatmeal into bowls. "What about the work?" she demanded.

"Sue and Larry are big enough to help," James answered. "If that's not enough, you'll have to hire someone." He eyed Gabrielle solicitously. Mary's insistence on the practical necessities was not going to warp his daughter's career. What did dishes, cooking or dusting matter when the child had a gift that ought to be cherished?

David, tousled and chubby, ran into the kitchen. "I'm hungry," he announced. He climbed briskly up on a chair and reached for his spoon. "How about some oatmeal?"

"Hold your horses," Gabrielle admonished. "Anyway, how do you ask?"

"Please." He beamed at his father. "Guess what I saw at school yesterday."

"At school!" echoed James. He subsided as he caught Gabrielle's wink.

"The school I go to," David explained. "There was a steam-shovel that took dirt out of the ground and loaded it on to a truck. A big truck. Then the truck hauled the dirt to the river——"

"David!" Mary said sharply. "Don't tell such lies. You know——"

"Mary," James interrupted warningly, "may I have some sugar?"

"It's right in front of you."

James groaned. "David has an imagination, Mary. You shouldn't confuse him."

He smiled at his youngest son. "What happened at the river?"

"There were lots of boys watching at the river," David related blithely. "They watched the truck drive up and dump all the dirt right into the water——"

"JIMMY!" Julia's voice echoed through the basement. "Have you seen Gabrielle?"

Jimmy inserted a tiny spoke into the rim of a coach wheel before he replied. "Naw," he yelled, holding the wheel to the light. "Good work, son," he complimented himself.

Julia's heels clicked on the stairs and across the stone floor. "My gosh," she said, peering over his shoulder. "Another one of those things!"

"So what?" growled Jimmy. His fingers lingered over the smooth side of the miniature coach. "Isn't she a beauty?"

"Yes. But what good is it?"

Jimmy leaned against the work-table and regarded Julia pityingly. "Ever hear of hobbies? Relaxation?"

"Oh, yes, from your strenuous activities."

Jimmy counted, "One, two, three, four——"

"All right, all right," broke in Julia, and added, "I wonder what Gabrielle's doing? Ma's up there doing the dishes alone."

"You've got two hands."

Swift footsteps halted Julia's reply.

"Oh, there you are! How come you're not helping ma?"

Gabrielle perched herself on a high stool. "Can't. Mr. Dumas' orders——"

"Mr. Dumas' orders!" cried Julia. "Really! Who does Mr. Dumas think he is?"

Jimmy waved a white handkerchief in front of Julia's face. "Girls! Girls!"

Speech deserted Julia, but Gabrielle explained coolly, "Mr. Dumas said I had to rest. I can't sing and be so tired."

"What about ma?"

"There's Sue and Larry," Gabrielle said.

Julia's tone levelled. "I should think you'd want to do something to repay all father's spending on you."

"I'll pay back every cent," Gabrielle flashed, but her face had whitened.

"Talk's cheap."

"Give her time. Give her time," intruded Jimmy.

“But she’s taking everything out and putting nothing in!” Julia protested.

“Does your measly little board pay up for all the years you put in free?” demanded Gabrielle.

“Atta girl!”

“Besides, I’m not paying for lessons when I’m not taking any.” She turned to her brother. “Jimmy, I’m going to Mr. Dumas’ to-night instead of Friday. Can you drive me over?”

The hours she spent each week with Paul Dumas became Gabrielle’s loveliest memories. In no small measure they fashioned the pattern of her life. Her receptive nature received Dumas’ friendship, his philosophy, his dreams and built them into the chambers of her thoughts. It was subtle instruction given with infinite tact. Gradually her horizons widened beyond the boundaries of the Livingston family and her school, her interests blossomed richly in new fields, but deeply embedded in all of their reading and conversation was the thought of Gabrielle’s music. For the first time she turned to the literature of music, finding the biographies of the great musicians and the operatic scores the most fascinating books she had ever read.

Gabrielle was scarcely aware of the flowering of her own personality, but to Dumas, this girl—half child, half woman—lifting her thirsty mind to his voice, became as his own daughter.

He said to her on one of their later evenings, “Marianne and I always wanted a child. It’s a pity we never had one. She would have been such a charming mother.”

“Marianne?”

His glance rested for a moment on Gabrielle. “My wife.”

“I didn’t know you had a wife.”

Dumas’ long body was as quiet as his heart. “She died five years ago. I think of her so much and so often it’s a wonder I don’t talk of her all the time.”

“Oh, but I’m sorry——”

“Don’t be. Marianne must be very happy—wherever she is. I made a great mistake when she died, Gabrielle. For a long time I tried to hold her to me. I couldn’t face the thought that she was dead. But at last I let her go—when I realized that my selfishness was keeping her from the fulfilment of her destiny.”

“I don’t understand,” Gabrielle said, her dark eyes puzzled. “How did you hold her?”

“It sounds fantastic, I know.” Dumas ran his fingers through his hair. “But when she died, life lost all meaning for me. I was

utterly adrift without her. My need of her clung to her day and night like a binding chain, until I felt that she was near me. It was comfort in my distraught state, but it wasn't satisfaction or peace. Then I found the solution and I released her. Do you follow me, Gabrielle? It was in this room. She decorated this room. Yellow was her colour."

"I thought it had a woman's touch," Gabrielle remarked, uncertain how to respond to Dumas' self-revelation.

He took no notice. His grey eyes were bright with some inner vision. "I'd just given a singing lesson. The pupil had gone and I'd sat down to play Schubert's *Unfinished Symphony*. As I played, a remark Marianne once made recurred to me. 'I wonder,' she said, 'who has inherited Schubert's great gift now?'

"At that moment my mind and my heart released her. My frantic efforts to hold her ceased. It was just as if she had said to me, 'You have let me go, Paul. So I am with you for ever. I am your rest, your achievement; I am your love and your memory. I can never leave you.' I have lived at peace ever since."

Dumas finished quietly. He had spoken so naturally that Gabrielle had scarcely felt the mystical touch. But she knew she had touched the fringes of a deep emotional attachment. Tears sparkled in her eyes. "You mean that you're never lonely?" The words sounded strangely inadequate as she used them.

"I'm often lonely, but I'm never lost."

"What was she like?"

Dumas was sensible of Gabrielle's white, intense face. He had not intended to show this side of his life to his young pupil. It was something he never discussed with anyone, but Gabrielle seemed in an elusive, intangible way—a link with Marianne.

A smile warmed his face. "Lovely, Gabrielle. Lovely. She was physically beautiful. Her body was slender, nicely proportioned. She had red hair and brown eyes. A tilted nose and a generous mouth. But it was not just her body. It was her mind, Gabrielle. Her nature. Her zest for living. Her warm companionship. You remind me of her in some ways, Gabrielle. You're so eager, so absorbing. Yet you're not greedy."

"Did she sing?"

"No, but she was a fine pianist. She always accompanied me on my concert tours."

For Gabrielle the room had three occupants. She sat looking at Dumas, and thinking of Marianne, who had created this lovely room,

who had warmed the life of this lonely, busy man. The room and the hour were rich in serenity, but Gabrielle could not sustain the note he had struck. She fell back on the associations of her home.

"Most people fall out of love instead of staying in love for years," she ventured. "I've never known anyone like you and—Mrs. Dumas, although our family has had some nice love stories in it, too. The first James Livingston cared terribly for his wife. And she loved him, too. And my grandfather and grandmother. Of course, I never knew them. They all died long ago."

With unseeing eyes, she watched Sadie come in with a tea-tray. "But my father and mother aren't in love," she volunteered. "They don't even belong together—somehow."

Dumas handed her a cup of tea.

"I don't know your father and mother, Gabrielle. But I do believe this—each of us gets what he gives. No more, no less. That thought encompasses all existence: economical, physical, spiritual."

Gabrielle travelled a way through her own fairyland as she went home. The enchantment of Dumas' love for his wife followed the magic paths beside her. Somewhere along the road that she would take she hoped that such love as theirs would visit her. She knew that she was not like Julia—whose emotions would always be subservient to her ambition. She wanted to sing—yes, how she wanted that! But even in the immaturity of her years and feeling she realized that she would not, could not, turn her head aside from love. It did not matter one whit that it was the knight-in-shining-armour love she dreamt about. The sense of proportion and values had been stimulated.

PART TWO

9

SUMMER, fleeting at best, came all too quickly to a close. The days that fell from the calendar made a cluttered heap in the Livingston waste-basket.

Rene had come home from the hospital to put on weight under a hearty diet. In September, she and Larry returned to grade school while Sue started her first year of high school. Jimmy was glad to get back to school. He had hated his summer of clerking in the grocery store. With only Saturdays to work, his senior year of high school loomed ahead with agreeable activity.

For Gabrielle—after her one month of respite—the hot summer had been crammed with housework, voice and piano study. Mary had made her pay in daily cleaning for her one hour a week under Mr. Dumas' tutelage. As a result, she entered her junior year of high school with tense nerves and a too thin body.

Julia was glad to have summer gone. The miserable months of July and August had dragged along for her. September would be dreary too, but the last of the month marked the end of her employment at West River. Diligently she had learned filing codes and office routine. The work had been hard and monotonous, but Julia could have borne its tedium if it had not been for the baleful influence Howard Renville exerted over the whole office force. His smile or his frown controlled the dispositions of the seven girls who worked for him as if the girls had been puppets whose guiding strings were wound about Renville's fingers. Julia proved to be no exception. Fight against it though she did, Julia caught herself shrinking from Renville's disapproval or seeking eagerly for his word of praise.

"It's hideous," Julia told herself again and again. "It isn't reasonable." Evening after evening she thought, "I won't go back. I can't go back."

But each morning she reported promptly at eight-thirty, and in three months acquired a sick nervous system and a rising sense of inferiority such as no one but Howard Renville had ever been able to instil in her.

The last Saturday in September she finished her work at West River College. At a quarter to twelve Howard Renville called her into his office. Foreseeing her release, Julia met Renville's wide condescending smile with as smug an arrogance.

"You can't hurt me now," she thought.

"Well, Julia," Renville said, "I've liked your work and I'm sorry I can't keep you on. If I have an opening in the future, I shall be glad to have you work for me again."

Julia would have liked to retort, "Maybe you would, mister, but I wouldn't." But she merely said with thin decorum, "Thank you, Mr. Renville."

Twelve o'clock, and Julia, with a light heart, walked through the big gates.

"I'm free," she wanted to shout. "I'm free!"

In the joyousness of the occasion, she rode downtown and bought herself a new dress. Longer skirts were in fashion. After years of straight lines, femininity dipped a rash hand into frills, went overboard for a natural silhouette. Julia returned home with a black "princess" dress, shirred into fullness at the breast, fitted at the waist and hips, uneven in hemline. She wore it proudly at dinner and the family was properly impressed.

Gabrielle said, "Gee, that's pretty."

Her father commented, "You look very nice, Julia."

Julia felt warm with happiness. The warmth clung to her through the movie and the after-theatre supper she attended with Bob Spencer.

As they waited for their sandwiches and coffee in the Dutch Grill, Bob reached across the table to take Julia's hand.

"Julia," he said, "why look for another job? Why not let mine do for both of us?"

Julia's tongue touched dry lips. This was the second time she had been out with Bob. His proposal had come without any preliminaries. He was smiling at her now, but his natural gaiety was subdued behind the gravity of his eyes.

"Well?" he questioned.

Julia covered her surprise with flippancy. She said, "I suppose I should exclaim, 'Why, Mr. Spencer, this is so sudden!' It is, you know."

"Admittedly. I never thought of marriage until to-night. In fact, I didn't realize I loved you until now. It's not only sudden. It's overwhelming. At least to me."

Julia took stock of all the prospects. Her mind raced. All at once

it slowed to a quiet, steady pace. "No, Bob," she said. "It wouldn't do. It wouldn't do at all."

Bob coloured. "You mean—you don't love me?"

She nodded, "That's right. I don't love you."

"You like me, don't you?"

"Very much."

"Well, then——"

She shook her head at his assumption of confidence. "Oh, no, I couldn't learn to love you. But that isn't the important reason."

Bob looked pained and baffled. "Well, what is the reason?"

"I don't want marriage yet." Julia withdrew her hand from his and settled herself against the bench. Her blue eyes were remote, deepened by strange distances. "You see, I want to get somewhere on my own."

"Oh! A career woman."

"If you like," Julia conceded coldly. "And some day you'll change your tone, Bob Spencer——"

Bob interrupted, "Don't get into the future so fast, Julia. Let's stick to the present."

"We can't," Julia retorted. "You're the one who projected the future before us."

The waitress brought their sandwiches. Bob and Julia remained silent until she had served their coffee.

Bob poured cream absently into his cup. "Go on," he urged bitterly, "look into the crystal ball."

Two red spots appeared on Julia's cheeks. "I don't think I care to discuss it with you."

Bob's anger died as quickly as it had flared up. "I'm sorry, Julia. But I'm crazy about you."

"You'll get over it," Julia said. But she didn't believe it. For the first time she was completely conscious of the power she held within herself. Bob would remember her for a long time. Not that his feelings mattered to her. It had dawned on her in the last few minutes that, beyond his good looks and his jaunty exterior, he was fundamentally shallow. But her worldly sense informed her that her future would gain nothing from being populated by enemies.

In the fullness of her realization, she leaned toward him, and her voice had smoothed to gentleness, her eyes were almost tender. "I'm sorry, Bob. Really I am. But I told you early this spring that I meant to go places in this world. I haven't changed my mind. Not a bit. I want money, position, success. Nothing, or nobody, is going

to stand in my way." She stated her case baldly. There was no apology in her heart for what she said, none on her lips. To Julia ambition justified itself.

Bob looked at her with sudden understanding. "And I would?"

"Marriage would—now."

"Well, I wished you luck once. I suppose I might as well do it again."

Julia's eyelids hid her eyes. She picked up a portion of her sandwich. "Thank you, Bob."

When he left her at her door, Bob laid both hands on her shoulders and forced her head backward until he could look into her eyes. He laughed softly and bent to her lips. They were full and compelling beneath his own. "You may be interested in a career," he said as she drew away from him, "but I'm damned if marriage won't be the end of it all!"

Julia was smiling as she climbed the stairs to her room. She felt warmed, set apart by Bob's proposal. Calf-love, perhaps, but still it was incense burned at her feet. There would be other men, she knew. More mature than Bob. But each one would count as she forged her way ahead.

While her exultant mood lasted, she set out again in quest of a job. She hated the narrow sphere in which she must turn, for Julia yearned over the dazzling stories of success that she read about in the papers and magazines. She felt within herself the power to march boldly into a larger sphere of achievement. Still, she had to start somewhere. She had to find a medium. This thought consoled her when Lola Wilson sent her to the Kimball Soap Company for an interview with the company's sales-manager, Thomas Handman, about a filing job.

Handman hired Julia at once. Her pay was only sixty-five dollars a month, but the place looked good to Julia. Although the Kimball Company was a comparatively new venture, it was already enlarging its office and factory. The present office was in a state of dust and disorder, but Handman assured Julia that the company would be moving into its new quarters the next week. He showed her the wide light rooms that the carpenters and plasterers were completing behind the dark cramped office the company now occupied.

"We're a good outfit," Handman said as they returned to his desk. "If you're a good worker, you'll get more money and you won't have to ask for it. But you'll have to earn it. Make no mistake about that."

Julia took him at his word. He was a young man, perhaps thirty.

He had stubbed Irish features and a delightful crooked grin. But there was no nonsense about him.

"I'll earn it," Julia promised.

She did earn it, too. Through weeks and months of moving equipment, Julia learned to file jobbers' orders, salesmen's correspondence, countless invoices and freight bills. Her experience at West River College had paved the way for her. She straightened disorderly letter files into neat, accurate, systematic filing. She relieved the switchboard operator, shaved dictophone records, ran factory time-clock cards through the addressograph. When an electric mimeograph was installed, it was Julia whom Handman instructed to run it.

The other girls were friendly and Julia responded to their overtures with a measured degree of warmth. The men were pleased at the new addition to their force. Even if she hadn't been efficient, they told each other, they liked to look at her. As she did her work well too, she was doubly welcome. Except to Arthur Kimball, president of the company, who seemed not to notice Julia at all, beyond a passing "good morning."

"Think nothing of it!" Jessie Rhame, the switchboard operator, reassured her. "He doesn't know that any of us exist. Unless," she added darkly, "we do something wrong."

Jessie Rhame was in her middle twenties, and she seemed to Julia an attractive person. Her hair was long, reddish brown and faultlessly waved. Her eyes were light blue; her features were delicately cut and her skin was almost childish pink and white. She was a tall girl, slim and straightly built; but her clothes sense and a deceptive air of feminine softness gave her a certain lambency in the dingy office. But she had a keen eye and critical sense for all that went on around her. She detested Thomas Handman. "He makes you work like a dog, and then he never likes anything you do," she confided.

Julia disagreed with Jessie. She admitted that he expected an enormous amount of work; but she also found that his praise, economical though it might be, always came at the right moment.

Jessie even resented Handman's interest in the Kimball Soap Company. "You'd think it was his," she often sniffed.

But Julia understood his attitude. She knew that Handman's life was wrapped up in the company. Young as he was, it was his foresight, his untiring effort that had built Kimball's into a national concern. He had sent salesmen into every state in the Union. The jobbers that Julia came to know through orders and correspondence were long established firms whose addresses ranged from Maine to

California, from South America to different parts of Europe. This expansion fired Julia's imagination. He worked as she would have done herself had she been in his place. He held the salesmen's reins in firm hands. He gave them liberal expense accounts and a good salary. But he made no exception to the rule, "Produce or get out."

Their orders were a measure of his success. Kimball soaps, soap chips and powders sold well. The company never sacrificed quality to price; consequently, the soaps sold for more than the average bar of soap or box of soap chips. But Handman always insisted that people didn't mind paying a little more for something good.

The proof of that, Julia agreed, was to be found in the daily "pick-ups" she filed from the letter baskets of the various departments. Stacks of orders, letters, paid bills, piles of pink, yellow, blue and white invoices, credits and debits. The actual job of filing Julia disliked intensely. It was boring and repetitious. She preferred to operate the switchboard; she tolerated the many other tasks she had to do. The bars of soap, faintly scented; the tall boxes of soap chips; the jars of scouring powders, fine as face powder, delighted her. The letters in Spanish, French, German and English that poured into her files, fascinated her. They blocked her ambition into high towers. Her position sounded humdrum enough. Filing clerk, as Jimmy scoffed, but Julia knew she was reaching up. The sky would be her limit.

Every month, without fail, she deposited twenty dollars in a savings account; twenty-four dollars a month went to her father for room and board. He protested that it was not necessary when she offered him her first payment.

"I want to," Julia replied proudly. "Besides, it will help with your expenses."

"Without a doubt," James assented.

"Bucks and the lady," Jimmy remarked, coming in as Julia made a notation on her cheque-stub.

"That's all right," Julia said. "I pay my own way and I'm starting a future."

"Oh, the rainy day girl."

"I'm not saving for a rainy day," snapped Julia. "I'm saving for an opportunity."

"Do tell!"

As the months progressed from winter to spring, time moved too fast for Julia; her advancement was too slow. As if he sensed her restlessness, Handman approached her at the switchboard late one

afternoon. He waited for her to answer an incoming call. Then he said, "You'd better study typing, Julia. The filing job won't pay you more than seventy-five."

Blue stare met blue stare.

"All right," said Julia.

10

IN the spring, James' sister, Gabrielle, came into the lives of the Livingstons. Unheralded, she lifted their knocker on a Saturday afternoon and listened to its echoing thud as she dropped it into place. A taxi-driver, loaded with suitcases, waited on the steps behind her.

James opened the door.

"Elle!"

"Hello, James!" She grasped his hand, laughing at his astonishment. "Well—may I come in?"

James chuckled and drew her into the hall. He motioned the driver to follow. "Leave the luggage near the stairs," he instructed. "Have you paid the man, Elle?"

"No, but I will."

After the departure of the driver, Elle preceded her brother into the living-room. "Where's everyone?" she asked, glancing around the empty room.

"Mary and Julia are somewhere about. Make yourself comfortable and I'll call them."

Julia and her mother came into the room together. Julia, neat and cool in a blue print dress; Mary, flushed and uneasy, smoothing her hair with warm hands.

Elle Atwood kissed them both briefly. Her blue eyes narrowed over her niece. "You've grown, Julia."

"Of course. It's been at least ten years since you last saw me."

Her aunt flushed.

Mary studied her carefully, then observed, "You don't change much, Elle."

Elle looked pleased. "I hope not. But you've gained weight, Mary!"

"Well, you never had seven kids."

"Thank God!"

James regarded his sister speculatively. He was always brutally frank with Elle, since subtlety lost all point against the smooth shield of her selfishness. "What's the occasion for the visit?" he wanted to know. "You haven't lost your money, have you? Or left Raleigh?"

"Neither," replied Elle shortly.

"There's at least one person in a generation who has no sense of humour," sighed James.

"He means you and me," Julia elaborated for her aunt's benefit.

Elle glanced at her with a spark of interest. "So you've had to listen to that, too!"

"Have I!"

Elle smiled thoughtfully and secretively. "We'll have to go into that later."

She turned to James. "Raleigh and I came up to Rochester this morning. Raleigh hasn't been at all well lately so he decided to go through the Mayo clinic. I left him there and came on here by train. I hope my coming hasn't interrupted any scheduled plans. I shan't be here long. To-morrow and Monday."

"We've no unbreakable schedule," James assured her. "But what's wrong with Raleigh?"

"He's supposed to have stomach ulcers. Only——" she paused dramatically, "we think it may be worse than that."

"Cancer!" breathed Mary.

"Let's not talk about it," Elle said, "or think about it—until we know."

Julia's eyes searched her aunt's well-kept face. Elle didn't look at all worried or disturbed, Julia reflected. She was utterly complacent and chic. From the top of her flaming head to the toes of her grey shoes, she was beautifully groomed. Every detail of her appearance struck the right note: the violets at her throat, the violet purse in her lap, the simple grey dress that moulded her figure to perfection.

"Where's my namesake?" Elle asked. "And the other children?"

"Your namesake!" James snorted. "Aren't you taking a lot upon yourself?"

Elle's fingers tightened over her purse. "Honestly, James, you're just as obnoxious as you used to be."

"Nonsense, my dear sister. I'm only honest."

"And I'm not, I suppose?"

James smiled. "You're pretentious."

Julia looked at her father with surprise. She had often heard that

he and Elle had had a stormy childhood together—never in sympathy over anything, large or small. It was diverting to see how he nipped away at Elle. Julia had always thought that she was the only one who roused him to such telling thrusts. She looked at Elle with fresh interest, but Elle had already risen gracefully and turned her back on James.

"Mary, you can show me to my room," she said. "Or if it's the old guest-room, I can find it myself. Guess you don't know this house any better than I do."

"It is the old guest-room," Mary said, wishing that Elle had let them know in advance she was coming. The guest-room hadn't been dusted for days. And now she would have to prepare something especially nice for dinner.

James' chuckle followed them to the door. "Don't go away mad, Elle."

Elle had recovered her good humour by dinner-time. She inspected each child to see how he or she was turning out. She seemed particularly interested in Gabrielle.

"Mary said you were studying voice with Paul Dumas. You must be awfully good or he wouldn't bother about you. What do you intend to do? Sing on the radio?"

"I don't know. I can't do anything until Mr. Dumas says I can. He made me promise that in the beginning."

"And very wise of him," James put in. "There's no telling what tangent you might get off on."

"I don't see how you could afford opera singing——" Elle said. "Studying for it, I mean——"

"She can't and we can't," put in Mary.

"Pass the potatoes," shouted David from the end of the table.

"That's no way to ask," Julia rebuked him.

David's apple cheeks grew redder. "Can I have some potatoes, please?" he amended.

"That's better," James approved.

The potatoes moved from hand to hand. With a faint frown of annoyance, Elle brought Gabrielle back into the conversation.

"How did you meet Paul Dumas, Gabrielle? Or—did you know him, James?"

"Not I. He's Kit's friend."

"Kit——" Elle's voice drifted into silence.

"D'you know Kit?" Rene asked with sudden interest. "He operated on me."

"Do I know him! My dear, I almost married him."

A curious hush followed her boast. Elle mused through it. "So Kit is still around. Imagine—I haven't seen him in more than fifteen years! How is he doing, by the way?"

"Very well," James replied. "Very well, indeed."

Elle's eyes narrowed. "How nice!"

"Oh, he hasn't as much money as Raleigh, but he's comfortably well off."

"But he never married?" Elle said sweetly.

James bowed an acknowledgment.

"You never can tell," Julia purred. "He may."

"What do you mean?" Elle demanded.

"There's always another Gabrielle," Julia answered.

"If you mean me!" cried Gabrielle. "Of all——"

James interrupted sharply, "Don't be absurd, Julia. Gabrielle's only fifteen."

"She'll get older," Julia retorted.

Gabrielle exclaimed indignantly, "I think you're horrid, Julia Livingston! Of all the silly, mean——"

"She's jealous," Jimmy said. "She's the one who's got a crush on Kit."

Julia's cheeks flamed. "That's a stupid thing to say."

Elle's eyes widened with quick perception. Trust James' family to brew a situation. The Livingstons would always be emotionally involved. But not Mary. Elle's glance rested on her briefly. How she had let herself go! James wouldn't like that. He had always expected certain standards of appearance from everyone, including himself. Elle's attention returned to Julia, who seemed to have grown into a fine spitfire. She leaned toward her niece. "So that's the way it is," she said. "But he doesn't care about you——"

"Kit's nice to me," snapped Julia. "That's all he needs to be."

"He would be nice to you, of course." Elle laughed softly, her glance flickering toward her brother. "History repeats itself, doesn't it?"

"I think not," James said. "This is an old wives' tale with absolutely no foundation."

"It had better not," Mary said. "With Gabrielle only fifteen."

"What do you mean—'history repeats itself'?" asked Sue, her brown eyes bright with curiosity. "Was Aunt Julia in love with Kit?"

James groaned. This was one of the family stories that he did not

want bandied about the dinner-table. Gabrielle and Julia knew the tale, but the younger children had had no indication of anything but Kit's friendly interest toward the family. Besides, Kit would hate this cold-blooded dissection of his private life. James had always thought that he had had a lucky escape from Elle.

Elle was answering Sue's question now with apparent relish. "Julia certainly was. But as it happened, Kit was in love with me."

"But Aunt Julia married Uncle Joe," Larry pointed out.

James nodded grimly at his sister. "Just start explaining if you can, Elle. This family is a glutton for questions and answers."

"I don't mind." Elle preened herself. She smiled at Larry's perturbed young face. Nor did she miss the avid interest of the other children. "Kit didn't love your Aunt Julia. So she married the next best. That happened to be Joe Wright. I don't really know—but I suppose they're very happy."

"They are," Mary certified with evident satisfaction. Elle needn't try to overpower her with her slim figure, her handsome clothes. There were other things in the world besides appearances, she thought with quiet resentment. Such things as good children, a rounded family life. "Julia's sorry she can't have any children," Mary added.

"She likes us," Rene said. "She's always wanting to take one of us home with her."

"When was she here last?" inquired Elle.

"Four years ago," Mary replied. "The year Joe was transferred from Kansas City to San Francisco."

"Oh, yes. She wrote me about it. But Raleigh and I were in New York at the time, so we missed her visit. She and Joe stayed in Chicago about a week, I guess."

"A handsome man—Joe," said Mary.

"Why, ma!" clucked Jimmy.

Julia pushed back her chair. "I move we have dessert," she said, starting to clear the table.

Later that evening when Julia was undressing for bed, a light knock sounded on her door. She pulled on her bath-robe and called, "Come in." Her Aunt Elle entered.

"Alone?" Elle asked.

Julia nodded. "Gabrielle hasn't come up yet."

Elle sat down on the settee. "Sit down, won't you?" she urged Julia, motioning to a chair. "Or am I disturbing you?"

"Not at all." Julia took the chair Elle indicated. Her aunt's glance roamed around the room, but Julia's remained on her aunt.

She had heard plenty about Aunt Elle in the last ten years, but she was not altogether prepared for the picture her aunt presented. Against the background of the old room, the immediate background of the blue linen covered settee, Elle looked like a portrait. In a faint unaccountable way she reminded Julia of the picture of the first Gabrielle that hung in the library. The resemblance was elusive. Perhaps it was the lovely contour of the face that was the same. Certainly it was not the hair, the eyes or the mouth. It was not, indeed, the expression of any of these.

Elle's hair flamed and curled in a definite pattern about her head. Elle's blue eyes were shadowed and cool, and lurking in their shadows were calculation and demand. Her mouth was small, the lips somewhat thin. It was a controlled and careful face. Her body was like that, too. Black crêpe emphasized her modish curves, gave her picturesqueness and restrained grace. Not the graciousness that belonged to the first Gabrielle. Not her natural delight in living to which both face and body had responded. A planned effect was what Elle had, and that only. Yet Julia felt there was much she could learn from her aunt.

The silence was broken when Elle said, "It looks just the same."

Julia started. "Oh—you mean the room."

"Well, certainly. What did you think I meant?"

Julia rushed away from an answer. "You and Aunt Julia slept in this room, of course?"

Elle nodded. "We're a funny family. We hang together and yet we all hang separately. I wonder how long it will go on—this tradition business—James, Julia and Gabrielle."

"Indefinitely, I hope."

"It's interesting. I'll admit that. But it has its disadvantages. It sets up a pattern. Tell me," asked Elle, "how do you and Gabrielle get on?"

"Well enough," Julia replied. "But we don't feel the same way about things. Gabrielle's wrapped up in her music."

"And she's too young to be interested in men yet," added Elle significantly. "But she has a trump card in Dumas." Elle drew a wisp of handkerchief through her fingers. "Does your mother do much entertaining now?" she asked.

"Oh, no. You know how mother is—people don't take kindly to her. Of course we have our special friends who come and go. The kids bring in their school-friends."

"Well, we're having a dinner-party to-morrow night," Elle

announced, "sponsored by me." Her smile was a red path of triumph. "There will be two guests—Kit and Paul Dumas."

Julia did not allow a swift question to reach either her eyes or mouth. "It's about time I met Paul Dumas," she said. "Gabrielle talks about him as if he were God. I hope he doesn't have lank hair."

"I'll be interested in meeting him, too." Elle rose, slender, gentle-breasted. "Well, good night, Julia." She laid a hand tentatively on the crocheted bedspread. "Pleasant dreams in this old, old bed."

For some minutes after the door had closed behind her, Julia stared contemplatively at its white panels. "Now I wonder—just what did she want?"

11

GABRIELLE came down to the living-room early the next evening. A fire had been lighted in the fireplace to offset the crisp cold of the spring night. It was not yet dusk, but Gabrielle lighted the lamps. Then she sat down to wait for Kit.

Gabrielle was looking better. During Easter vacation she had gained a little weight. It was hard for her to refrain from singing, but the week of comparative rest had built her up, and released some gathering tension that had jangled her nervous system and threatened the mainsprings of her musical talent. Since the beginning of her work with Paul Dumas, she had matured subtly; she was more at home on the adult level and quite unconsciously she had absorbed some sense of intrinsic values from Dumas. Also, he had outlined a course of reading for her along musical lines. This was Gabrielle's first intellectual contact with the world of music. Up to now her training had been purely technical.

She longed to let herself go, to sing as the spirit moved her, but this impulse was so controlled in her now that the thought of Dumas always checked her. Gabrielle was now quite fully under his influence. She was working for great ends and she must observe the rules.

Yet she kept to the family circle. Her strict musical routine gave an added zest to the minor family annoyances that centred on her mother. They were rambling—homey things, unaccountably dear against the impersonal technique that surrounded her voice.

To-night Gabrielle had forgotten her lessons. Enmeshed in the tangled strings of her family life, she sat within the focus of the living-room lights, looking forward to one of the long and talkative evenings characteristic of the Livingstons.

For some reason that she could not define, Gabrielle wanted to be with Kit when he first met Aunt Elle. An absurd protective instinct had hurried her fingers as she dressed. "She mustn't see Kit first! She mustn't—she mustn't——"

Sitting primly in the big wing-chair, Gabrielle smoothed out the skirt of her new rose dress. She thought, "I don't like her. How could Kit love her—ever? She doesn't care about anyone except herself. Otherwise, she wouldn't have left Kit in the first place. Otherwise, she wouldn't have left Uncle Raleigh alone and sick to come on here."

She heard footsteps on the stairs. "Don't let it be ma!" she prayed. "Don't let her ask me to help in the kitchen!"

But it was her mother. Mary's hair was a smooth greying gold about her face. Her cheeks were warmly flushed. In her grey dress, she looked neat but undistinctive. It was obvious to Gabrielle that she had made a great effort to look her best. Just when one felt most exasperated with ma, she would do something that touched one.

As she had expected, ma said, "I'll need you to help me, Gabrielle."

"Oh, ma, ask Sue. Please, ma. Please!"

Mary's mouth set in a stubborn line. "What's the reason you can't help?" she asked crossly.

Couldn't her mother see that she was growing up? Couldn't she see that to-night she wanted to take her place beside Julia and her Aunt Elle—with the two men most important in her life—outside of her father—coming to the house? And over and above all there was the need to be with Kit.

Gabrielle crossed the room to her mother's side. "None, really. But just this once. I'd like to be here when Kit—and Mr. Dumas come."

"Well, I suppose you should be," Mary capitulated with sudden comprehension. "None of the rest of us knows Mr. Dumas."

"Shall I call Sue?" Gabrielle offered relievedly.

"No—oo. It seems kind of mean to make her help when she isn't eating with us. You can come out after they get here."

"Thanks, ma, I will. Did the kids mind eating early?"

"Sure they did. But Sue minded most. She thinks she's grown up already."

Mary departed kitchenward, and Gabrielle resumed her vigil. As it happened, her caution was wasted. The whole family watched Kit's meeting with Elle. Just before everyone went in to dinner, Elle made her entrance. She paused briefly in the doorway. The picture in a frame. Bright hair capitalized by a pale yellow gown.

Gabrielle, her eyes on Kit, missed Paul Dumas' quiet smile. But she saw Kit's face, and she knew that he had not forgotten.

Elle extended both hands to Kit. "Kit, darling! It's been ages——"

"How are you, Elle?"

"Wonderful, Kit. Now that's your cue——"

"Curtain!" cried James. "Act II. Elle, this is Gabrielle's teacher, Paul Dumas. Mr. Dumas, Mrs. Atwood."

"Mr. Dumas! I'm so glad to know you. Gabrielle has spoken of you so often and so glowingly."

"That was good of Gabrielle," Dumas said, bowing. "However, I didn't know that Raleigh's wife was her aunt."

"Oh—you know my husband?"

"Quite well. Though I haven't seen him for many years. He's not with you?"

"He's in Rochester for a physical check-up. I'm joining him tomorrow." She took his arm. "I believe you're taking me in to dinner."

"Good. I'm famished. And I'm also eager to see the dining-room. Gabrielle tells me it's lighted only by candles. A nice touch and an odd one—in this day and age."

Mary asked Gabrielle and Jimmy to help her in the kitchen. As they hurried out of the room, Kit offered his arm to Julia. He grinned over her head at James. "Grab her other arm. We bring up the rear."

Dinner was a chatty affair. The mechanics of the meal, with Gabrielle helping her mother serve, moved smoothly. The conversation switched from movies to business, from business to politics, from politics to anecdotes and history. Under the influence of some very old wine that he had opened for the occasion, James was at his brilliant best.

Although the men carried the conversation at will, Elle broke in often and effectively. She was used to making herself heard in any company. Gabrielle was an interested listener, but Julia felt ill at ease in her aunt's presence. The discussion touched only her outer consciousness. She felt inadequate as Dumas, her father, Elle and

Kit swung from one topic to another. Julia preferred a more intimate type of conversation, with the personal element paramount. She could not bear to be out of the picture, yet to-night she felt inferior to Gabrielle, young as she looked in her rose gown, with her dark hair falling over her shoulders.

Scattering a lull that followed Elle's description of her perfume bottle collection, Julia astonished Jimmy by introducing his hobby of coach modelling.

"You're not the only one who collects things, Aunt Elle. You should see Jimmy's coaches."

"Coaches?" puzzled Elle. "Stage coaches?"

"I make them," Jimmy said. "Small ones."

"Really."

"What have you done?" asked Dumas.

"Oh—Washington's inaugural coach, a tally-ho——"

"He's making a prairie schooner now," said Julia.

Jimmy raised eloquent eyebrows. "My press agent. Unlooked for appreciation in the bosom of my family."

"I'd like to see them—if I may," Dumas requested.

"Oh, sure, I've got a shelf full in the library."

A telephone call for Kit caught them in the middle of dessert. He came back to the dining-room, hurried and apologetic. "I'm sorry, but I have to leave. A baby. Gabrielle, eat my pie for me."

Elle had risen. "Oh, Kit, must you?"

His glance settled on her chagrined face and remained there for an intent moment. Then he smiled pleasantly. "I'm afraid so. Births don't wait even for Mary's custard pie."

Elle accompanied him into the hall. Gabrielle's body grew rigid, waiting for her return. She had not missed the look that had passed between them. Although no one seemed to notice Gabrielle's stillness everyone did because they, too, were conscious of Elle's absence. Even Paul Dumas, who caught and held her attention until Elle put in her appearance—cool, smiling, and completely poised.

"Stupid—being a doctor," she said.

Dumas pulled back her chair. "You know better than that, Mrs. Atwood," he chided her. "It's a wonderful profession."

She smiled up at him. "Oh, it is, of course, but so inconvenient."

Gabrielle thought, "It means more to her that Kit has left the house than that her husband may be dreadfully ill."

After dinner Dumas admired the intricate carving, the lovely finish of Jimmy's coaches.

"I like the tally-ho," he said as they ambled toward the living room. "You should enter it in one of those modelling contests. I've never seen finer work."

Jimmy beamed. "Maybe I will. Maybe I will at that."

Comfortably seated in front of the fire with the rest of the family, Dumas' grey eyes travelled appreciatively from the tiled fireplace to the white panelled walls. "What a lovely place this is!" he said. "Other footsteps in a modern room."

James' face lighted. "That's what my father thought. He modernized the whole place—heat, electricity, plumbing. The decorating, too. He had the furniture refinished and reupholstered not long before he died. Of course, when we had the upholstering done over some years ago, we changed the colour schemes."

He turned to his sister. "Remember those hideous black stoves dad hated so?"

"I hated them, too," Elle said. "But they were much warmer than fireplaces."

"I'm curious about all these fireplaces," Dumas said. "Whose idea was that?"

"Great-grandmother Gabrielle's," James answered. "She had a passion for fireplaces and great-grandfather built the house to please her."

"The whims of a woman!" groaned Jimmy.

"He says that because he has to take care of the fireplaces," Mary told Dumas, with a fond glance at Jimmy, who, in spite of continual grumbling, always completed with dispatch any task assigned to him around the house.

"Reason enough," Jimmy commented.

"I agree with you there," said Dumas.

At Elle's suggestion, Dumas played for them. He played the comparatively new baby grand piano, but his delight in their old spinet was immeasurable. "I suppose you know," he said, "that you have some priceless possessions here."

Mary sighed. "Yes, I suppose we have. But it's like living in an art museum."

"Oh, no!" cried Gabrielle. "Why—this is home."

"It really is," Dumas said. "It really is."

Julia leaned forward in her chair. "Then you think the house has a future as well as a past?"

"I think it has a present," Dumas replied, looking with some curiosity at Julia's blonde good looks. "That is a guarantee of the future, if you need one."

"I don't think so," Julia said quickly. "It isn't enough."

"Julia's ambitions run to fame and fortune," James said. "She thinks the Beltrami girls ought to do something for the family."

Elle came forward instantly. "I didn't do so badly."

James brushed her assumption aside. "Oh, you married money. Julia means to do something on her own."

Dumas smiled thoughtfully at Julia. He noticed her lovely body, the delicate chiselling of her face, the questing eyes, the tense mouth. He compared her mentally with Gabrielle. Their outlook was worlds apart. Gabrielle's voice with Julia's propulsion would have been an irresistible combination, he reflected. And yet, he would not have changed Gabrielle if he could. There was something infinitely fine in Gabrielle's growing approach to living. As her years caught up with her, her development would be rich and all encompassing.

"You're right not to live in the past, Julia," he said. "Yesterday is gone. You have to make to-day. But not to-morrow."

Julia asked acutely, "Aren't you preparing Gabrielle for to-morrow?"

"In a sense," Dumas acquiesced, his smile deepening. "But not altogether. I'm instructing her for the day that is. If she meets to-day fully, her to-morrows will take care of themselves. What I mean is—don't wait for to-morrow before you begin to live."

"But we can't do anything now," Julia protested. "Gabrielle and I. We're too young."

James stood up abruptly. "Such a statement! When you're forty, you'll look back and wish to high heaven you were eighteen again. Come, Dumas, let's have a drink—to youth and its blindness."

He mixed three stiff highballs for Dumas, Elle and himself. He poured four glasses of wine for the others.

"To youth," said Dumas simply.

Elle sampled her drink. "Hmmm," she said. "Good Scotch." She shook her head at James. "And you an upholder of the law!"

James snorted. "I'm a lawyer," he said. "I never did believe in prohibition."

"We're heading for repeal," Dumas said. "I don't think it will take much longer. A bad law is worse than no law at all."

"They'll probably run saloons," Jimmy prophesied. He thrust out his chest, and wine-glass lifted, sang, "'Father, dear father, come home with me now——'"

"You should go into retirement," James advised. "Let's have Gabrielle take the taste out of our mouths. Any objections, Dumas?"

"I don't think one song would hurt. But that's not a precedent, my dear," he reminded his pupil.

Dumas accompanied Gabrielle. She sang Stephen Foster's *Jeannie with the light brown hair*, sang it sweetly, clearly.

At once the evening belonged to her. She was not a thin, growing girl of fifteen. She was beauty, fragile and true, powerful and gentle. Her voice and her body were one in a moment of triumph.

For the first time in her life, Julia was afraid of her sister. Her fear ran through her, a tiny tremor of panic, fleeting but very real.

Elle listened with amazement. This couldn't be true——

The last note was scarcely off Dumas' fingers before Elle asked, "What I'm interested in knowing is—are you pointing her toward opera?"

"Perhaps."

"I think that's very unwise. Think what sacrifices this whole family will have to go through."

"They will not," said Gabrielle. "I'll pay for my own lessons as soon as I'm out of school."

"Do you realize what that will mean? No good clothes—no extras—— An expensive pin, a good dinner——"

"It will be worth it," Gabrielle retorted.

"Maybe."

"I really don't think it will be that bad," Dumas said. "I think Gabrielle can live as she goes."

"I think so, too," said Gabrielle.

When Paul Dumas had said his good nights, and she and Julia were going upstairs, Elle said casually, "Step in to see me in a few minutes, Julia. I'd like to talk to you."

Julia brushed her hair and powdered her nose before going to Elle's room. She felt that she needed a good appearance to face her aunt. She found Elle wearing a yellow flannel robe. Her hair was in perfect order; her make-up intact. Feathery white slippers covered her narrow feet.

She and Julia sat down on opposite sides of the brick fireplace. The guest-room was the least attractive room in the house. Its proportions were dwarfed by the large pineapple four-poster bed which Julia privately thought ugly. The cretonne-covered chairs were small and ridiculously gay in relation to the bed. The chest of drawers matched the chairs in delicacy of line. But the colours in the curtains, the cretonnes and the bedspread were bright and flaunting. Reds, browns, deep yellows.

Elle leaned her head against a cluster of yellow daisies that patterned the chair covering. She scrutinized her niece frankly.

"This voice stuff may be all talk, but just the same, Julia, you'll have to watch your step. Or Gabrielle is going to top you."

Julia stiffened.

A frown flew across Elle's forehead. "Now don't get mad. I'm telling you this for your own good. You ought to be grateful."

Elle had put into words the sharp premonitory warning that Julia had experienced while Gabrielle sang. "Well," she said, relaxing fractionally, hating her aunt for seeing so much, for digging into their lives.

"You'll have to make the most of yourself," Elle counselled her. "Your face, your figure. Both are good. Any talents you may have. I wouldn't presume to tell you all the ways. I don't know you well enough. But"—the blue eyes widened—"your hair isn't right. Nor your clothes."

Julia swallowed an angry humiliation. "What's wrong with my hair? With my clothes?"

"In itself, your hair's fine. Lovely, in fact. But that permanent wave! It doesn't suit you at all. Why not—comb it back smoothly—and leave it long, coil it in a soft knot at the back of your head?"

"Yes."

"Don't be so brusque!" Elle flashed. Her voice changed—became a slow, quiet stream. "Soften up a bit. Not too much. Yours is a sophisticated personality. Don't wear fussy clothes. Get good lines. Simple things. Stay away from prints." She offered Julia a cigarette. Julia accepted it mechanically, her mind centred on her aunt's flow of advice. "The other things you'll have to figure out for yourself. But believe me, you had better start figuring now."

Elle stood up, an adequate gesture of dismissal. "I don't know why I'm telling you these things. We aren't the least bit congenial." She shrugged. "Well, good night, Julia."

Julia closed the guest-room door firmly behind her.

"I know why you told me," she thought with a certain grimness. "Because you're afraid of Gabrielle. Just as I am."

ELLE'S influence lingered behind her after she left to join her husband. She had stirred up Gabrielle to occult concern over Kit. She had quickened her desire to sing, to work more ardently for Dumas. She had prodded Julia into a new and critical conception of herself, which crystallized as she sat staring into her mirror before going out on a date with Rufus Drake. "I look frumpy," she said, her eyes settling on Gabrielle's reflection in the glass.

Gabrielle looked up from a slip she was mending. "What's the matter with you? Got a fever?"

"No." Julia swung around from the dressing-table. "Just some common sense."

"You should talk about being frumpy. Look at me. One new dress in a blue moon."

"You're young. It doesn't matter so much to you. Besides, you should kick. You spend enough on voice lessons to buy a whole new wardrobe."

Gabrielle fastened her thread. "I'm young! Phooey! As if that made any difference. And what's more, I'm sick and tired of hearing everybody yell about my lessons. Ye gods! You'd think we were starving to death, and I was grabbing the bread out of your mouths."

"Well, ma runs on a darn slight budget."

"We seem to get along." Gabrielle slid off the bed. "Did you hear about Uncle Raleigh?"

"No, did Elle write?"

"Yes. Uncle Raleigh's to be operated on to-morrow. She didn't say much else."

Jimmy's voice boomed along the hall. "Hi, Julia! Rufus is here."

"Okay!" called Julia.

She adjusted her hat and picked up her coat from the settee. Neither one of them seemed the desirable object it had been when she bought it. "I get so darn sick of Rufus Drake and Bob Spencer," she said. "Especially that mushy Bob. I'd like to meet somebody new."

Rufus was personable enough—too handsome, indeed, for his own good, too comfortably well off for his best development. He was a strapping fellow, blond and grey-eyed, his features sharp and clear.

He had no ambition. When he graduated from the University—if he ever did—he supposed he would enter his father's brokerage firm. For the present, he was content to study when it was absolutely inescapable, and to dance and drink away the rest of his time. He was gay, thoughtless, with a polish of manner that Julia privately thought synthetic.

He called Julia occasionally. He took her out on an average of once a month. Their relations were tenuous but quite sustained. Rufus could criticize Julia mercilessly without incurring her anger; and Julia could pounce on Rufus' shortcomings without damaging their friendship.

"Oh, so you've made the rounds again," Julia would greet his suggestion of a date.

Rufus' answer was pleasant: "I don't know why I bother with you at all. You're too damn frank for a woman. Maybe that's why I like you—because you don't soft soap me. At least, not often. And"—his tone brightened—"you are good looking."

"It's always been a mystery to me why I put up with you either. You're certainly a total loss except for your money."

"Modesty forbids my saying—and my good looks."

"Modesty!"

To-night Rufus was taking Julia to the home of his aunt, Letitia Crawford, for a game of bridge. "Duty," he informed Julia briefly. "I hope you don't mind."

Julia's eyebrows lifted. "I don't. I like to play bridge."

"You would."

Julia was secretly pleased to be going to Miss Crawford's. One of the disadvantages of her abundant family life was the real lack of good social contacts that cramped her ambitions in that direction. No member of the family was more fully aware than Julia that it was ma's forthright domesticity and complete want of *savoir-faire* that cut them off from the gayer social life of the city.

Julia knew that Letitia Crawford was one person who could help her immeasurably if she chose, but she concealed her eagerness as she walked into the charming apartment that was Miss Crawford's best advertisement as an interior decorator. Here was someone with money and social position who was a successful careerist, too—the ultimate in desirability as far as Julia was concerned.

The apartment was small, its white walls and woodwork a perfect background for its reminiscently Victorian furniture. Letitia had adapted the Victorian touch to modern usage and the effect was

piquant if uncomfortable. Schooled to appreciate good antiques, Julia correctly appraised the painted rocker, the stiff Civil War chairs and love-seat.

They failed to intrigue Rufus. "Damned uncomfortable," he declared, moving from a resistant seat to a wing-chair near the electric fireplace. "Every time I come here I give them one more chance but they always let me down."

Letitia herself was a modish woman in her early forties. She was short and plump, but her clothes were carefully chosen to obscure both her weight and height. Her black hair and eyes italicized the dead whiteness of her face, the scarlet line of her mouth.

She was affable to Julia. No more than that. Her other guest received most of her attention. He was Samuel Ward, younger than Letitia by at least ten years, a slender, effeminate young man with sleek black hair, delicate features and thin nervous hands. Julia learned that he was an art collector, with a tiny shop on Eighth Street.

While Rufus dealt a hand, Letitia asked, "Did you get the garnet bracelets, Sam?"

His brown eyes lit up. His enthusiasm was immoderate. "Yes, and the ear-rings. Just your type, my dear. But I'm warning you. They'll cost you a pretty penny if you want them."

Letitia's white skin reddened. But she smiled brightly at Julia. "Sam—Mr. Ward—has just returned from London."

"I envy you, Mr. Ward."

Julia realized that she was not making herself sufficiently felt. Her part in the conversation seemed gauche and detached. Her attention strayed from the bridge game as she foraged for an opening that would focus attention on herself. Once more she fell on her family inheritance. The Livingston house. Of course, it could not fail to interest anyone with a knowledge of antiques. Julia commented on Letitia's rocker and hurried on from there, unconsciously quoting James, as all his children did when they spoke of the house or the Livingston family. It pleased her that Letitia and Sam responded eagerly to her stratagem, drawing her adroitly into their inner circle.

"I've often thought I'd like to see that house of yours, Julia," Letitia observed.

Julia hesitated. Her father would burst a blood-vessel if she brought a sightseer to the house. And she was fully aware that that was what Letitia's visit would amount to.

But she plunged recklessly into an invitation, trusting blindly to Letitia's tact to handle her father, "We'd like to have you visit us.

If you can get him started, father is a perfect fountainhead of knowledge when it comes to genealogy and antiques. It's more or less a hobby with him."

"I wouldn't mind getting hold of some of your things for my shop," Letitia ventured.

Julia's skin crawled a little. Even the elite sometimes overstepped the bounds of good taste. But she had brought it on herself. In all honesty she had to admit that. So she softened the edges of her refusal as best she could, "I'm afraid you couldn't persuade father to part with any of them. They're too much a part of his daily life."

And yet there had been times when a younger Julia had wondered why her father did not dispose of a few antiques when the bills became too pressing. It would have seemed a reasonable solution to her then.

Rufus rebelled. "Are we playing bridge or is this a hen-party?"

Letitia protested, filled with consternation at the obvious implication to Sam, "Why, Rufus, darling!"

Rufus said coldly, "Your bid, my good aunt."

Rufus' remark, however, sailed over Sam's head. Sam picked up his cards and sorted them, boredom in every movement. Everyone settled down to the bridge game, but in spite of Julia's and Letitia's finished playing, strain sifted through the evening.

On the way home Rufus apologized for letting Julia in for such a horrible time.

"But I enjoyed it," Julia protested. "Your aunt and Mr. Ward are different, and I'm starved for variety, Rufus. I want to meet people who do things in a different way, who have vision and artistic knowledge."

Rufus' foot pressed the accelerator in a burst of speed. "My God!" he said.

"Don't be profane, Rufus. It doesn't become you. Nor does your rudeness."

Surprisingly Rufus laughed. "Okay, Granma Livingston. I could kiss you for that, you smug witch."

"Don't bother," said Julia coldly.

To her surprise Rufus telephoned her the following week. Without preliminaries, he wanted to know if she worked on Saturdays.

"In the morning," Julia told him. "Why?"

"Don't rush me. Letitia seems to like you. Impossible to account for tastes, isn't it? She thinks you have possibilities. She wants to proposition you."

"What!"

"Now, now—— Get your mind out of the gutter. She wants you to help in the shop on Saturdays. With your yen to go places, it might be a good bet."

"Well—I hardly know what to say."

"Say it to Letitia, not to me. I've done my duty."

"When?"

"When have I done my duty? Why, my sweet——"

"Don't be an idiot! When shall I talk to your aunt?"

A sigh floated over the wire. "The girl has no mind of her own. I'm disappointed in you, my pet."

"All right, Mr. Drake. Thanks for calling."

"You're welcome."

Julia stopped at Letitia's shop on Saturday afternoon. It consisted of a large display-room, a small stock-room, and a cubby-hole of an office. Letitia motioned Julia to a chair in the office.

"I'm glad you came, my dear." She wasted no time in small talk, but continued, "This summer I'd like to have part of my Saturdays free, so I'll need an assistant. You seem to know something about antiques. That's why I spoke to Rufus about you. I know that you work on Saturday mornings, but if you're interested I'll give you three dollars for the afternoon."

"Grand," said Julia. "I'd love it."

The family approved of Julia's new venture. James thought it an excellent idea.

Gabrielle suggested, "You should invite Miss Crawford here. I'll bet she'd like our house."

"Yes, for what she could get out of it," said James.

Julia kept prudently silent.

"At least you don't have to sell groceries," Jimmy quipped.

"Jimmy, the gripe," twitted Sue.

David repeated her label with an engaging chuckle.

Jimmy scowled across the table at her. "Why don't you go out and get a job, lazy-bones? You could sell papers."

"She has to help me," Mary said, as usual, missing the sting of Jimmy's remarks.

"Yeah, but I do all the work," grumbled Larry. "Sue sneaks a book and I have to do her work besides my own."

"What about that, Sue?" James asked.

Sue's dark skin coloured heavily.

"Well, it's the truth," said Larry.

"We'll have no chiselling in this house," James decreed. "Remember that, all of you."

The kitchen door flew open, and Rene burst into the room. All eyes sought her warm, flushed face. "Sorry, I'm late," she apologized. "But I was practising a new dance, and I forgot the time."

"What's this?" inquired James. "What do you mean, a new dance?"

"At the Mill House," Rene explained. "I'm studying dancing."

"She means the Millman Settlement House," Gabrielle explained.

"Oh, of course."

"You know," Rene said, helping herself generously to potatoes, "if Larry would learn, too, we might be a dancing team like——"

Larry's curly head shot up in alarm. "What!" he shouted. "Me a dancer! Be yourself!"

James' glance met Gabrielle's. He was smiling. And Gabrielle remembered, "He's glad he married ma. Because of us."

She looked down the table towards her mother. But there was no kindred light in Mary's face.

13

RALEIGH ATWOOD recovered from his operation and returned to his home in Chicago. The knowledge of death accompanied him. For the surgeon's knife, skilled and sure, had disclosed a cancerous growth—malignant, steadily advancing. To-day. To-morrow. Or the next day.

Raleigh, tired but resolute, had no fear of the last to-morrow. He had lived a long life and he had lived it to the fullness of each hour. Whatever regrets he might have had, he had dismissed along with his youth. What came his way, he took, turning it into enjoyment, wealth, achievement. At sixty-six he was physically ill, materially rich, mentally content.

His wife had been at once his weakness and his strength. His love for her was a physical expression of himself. They had no mental companionship. He knew her shallow but active mind as intimately as he knew her bodily perfections. He took what she had to give and sought no more and no less.

On his trip home, Elle went with him. Returned with him to their spacious Chicago apartment—to wait, her heart cool, measuring, without regret.

That was in May. In June, on the night of Jimmy Livingston's graduation from high school, Raleigh died. Died after a pain-racked day in the quietness of his room, the light from the bed-lamp shining over Elle's hair, shining into his eyes.

Without tears, Elle saw to his burial. She listened with caught breath to the terms of his will. Raleigh left her outright a bequest of ten thousand dollars. He made a gift of five thousand dollars to James Livingston. Except for minor legacies to various relatives, the remainder of his estate went to Elle under the supervision of his solicitor, Hamilton Rose, of Chicago.

Elle was content. She closed the Chicago apartment, and in sophisticated black started on a trip around the world.

Their inheritance came as a surprise to the Livingstons. None of them had been intimate with Raleigh Atwood. But James found the explanation in a sealed letter to him, enclosed with the lawyer's statement:

"DEAR JAMES,

I'm sure you'll agree with me when I say it's a good life whichever way you look at it. You and I aren't alike at all except in that one viewpoint, but curiously enough, I've always considered it a bond between us.

Best wishes,
RALEIGH."

James had never been able to understand Raleigh's devotion to Elle, but he had admired his capacity to live well and successfully. And the way he had stepped out, without complaint or regret, was in keeping with the tenor of his life.

Mary took advantage of the financial windfall to ask for a new gas stove and a girl to help with the housework.

"Better not spend the money before you get it," Jimmy cautioned.

"Don't worry about getting it," James reassured him. "If Raleigh leaves us five thousand dollars, it's because he had it to give."

"I'll bet Aunt Elle got a pile," Larry surmised.

Gabrielle said, "I hope she doesn't come here now."

A pregnant silence followed her words. Mary shifted out of the leather chair and crossed the room to the windows. She pulled back the curtains to let in more air.

"Kit hasn't been here for a long time," she said.

During the summer, Julia agitated the family by moving the furniture about in nearly every room in the house. She had learned rapidly from Letitia, so that now when she walked into a room, she could put an accurate finger on its weak points and possibilities. Her taste was being developed along sound lines, but as a whole the Livingstons preferred the static arrangement which had been around them from childhood.

"My gosh," Jimmy grumbled, coming into the living-room on a Sunday afternoon to find not a chair in its accustomed place. "What would happen if she worked at that shop every day?"

Gabrielle looked up from a stack of music she was sorting. The advent of a maid in the household gave her more and more time at the piano. "She's getting us new drapes," she said. "Blue and white calla lilies."

"She'd better keep out of my room."

"She said ours was all right."

"Imagine that!"

Gabrielle laid down a sheet of music, and glanced critically about her. "You'll have to admit this room does look much nicer. It has an air about it."

Julia's arrangement of furniture and pictures was undeniably attractive. She had taken the portrait of the first Gabrielle from the library, where James had enjoyed it for so many years, and hung it over the fireplace in the living-room.

"Silly for her to smile unseen," she had said, stepping back to survey the effect.

The first Gabrielle presided over the family. Lovely and gracious, she gave the room its keynote. She was the centre of its attraction, the heart of its life, past and present.

While her Saturday afternoons at the Crawford studio stimulated Julia's sense of colour, of proportion, of harmony, they also awoke in her the realization that office work was a blind alley. Her discontent grew deeper. Not that she wanted to be an interior decorator. As much as she enjoyed the work, it did not seem to be her bent, her forte. Her mind became a sea of unformed ideas, churning ceaselessly in attempted formation.

At the peak of the summer business rush, Thomas Handman transferred Julia from the files to an advertising department he had sponsored and installed. The new position meant a rise in salary and relief from the deadly monotony of filing, but Julia was disappointed

because Handman had not put her in charge of the department. Instead, he had given the superintendency to a newer employee, a girl as Irish as himself, but one whose efficiency and experience could not be denied.

Julia measured the map of the United States into zones, carefully listed jobbers and salesmen for each zone, and as painstakingly mailed circulars and form letters that described in glowing terms the merits of Kimball soaps. Gradually her typing speed improved. Handman complimented her on the neat letters she turned out and waited patiently for greater speed.

When Julia worked late on a summer evening to mail a special rush of advertising, Handman, too, stayed after five o'clock. He sat in his small office and reeled off letter after letter into the mouthpiece of his dictaphone.

Julia was running envelopes through the sealing machine when Handman passed her on his way to the shipping room.

"Just about through, Julia?"

"This is the last." She smiled at him. "Your zones certainly make a lot of work for me."

Handman grinned—the crooked grin that brightened his entire face. "Wait till we zone the cities, too."

"That will be too much for me."

But before Handman could complete his advertising project, the stock market crashed, and with incredible swiftiness, businesses, jobs, fortunes tumbled.

Caught in the panic, the Kimball Company slashed departments and salaries. Handman's advertising schemes were tossed into the waste-paper basket. And Handman, quick-tempered, but more hurt than angry, resigned from Kimball's.

Julia was shocked. To her Thomas Handman and the Kimball Company were synonymous. Handman, more than Arthur Kimball, was the power that moved the soap company.

"You'd better hush," Jessie Rhame warned her when Julia voiced her opinions. "If Kimball hears you, you'll be sunk."

Julia did not wait for Mr. Kimball to fire her. She resigned. The end of the advertising department meant that she must revert to her former job of filing. She declined politely but firmly. "Thank you," she told the new sales-manager, "but I think I'll look for something else."

This was towards the last of November. In the weeks that followed, Julia found job-hunting a dreary business. "People just aren't hiring,"

she told her mother one dark December afternoon. "They're laying people off right and left."

She had been downtown all day. Now she stood close to the living-room fire and extended her hands to the blaze. Mary sat opposite her, sewing.

"Why don't you try the department stores?"

Julia shrugged. "That would only be temporary. I want something permanent."

"I hope Jimmy won't have to quit the University."

"Why should he? There's money from Uncle Raleigh——" Julia's voice trailed into silence.

"What's the matter?"

"I just thought of something."

Mary bit off a length of thread. "Well—what?"

Julia said slowly, "I might call West River College——"

Her mother's face brightened. "Why don't you, for goodness' sake?"

Julia felt that it was like selling herself into bondage. Howard Renville again, from whom she had made one escape. She shivered, touching the fringe of an unknown evil, sensing the dark and clouded pools of a distorted personality. She shrugged, impatient with herself for seeing things half hidden, not wholly apparent. "I will," she decided. "To-morrow."

Anna Smoll, the maid, appeared in the doorway. She was a sturdy woman of thirty-five, neat, mouse-like in manner and appearance. Her presence in the house had greatly lightened the domestic burden for Mary and the younger children.

"I beg pardon, Mrs. Livingston, but there's a man at the back door to see about the leaky faucet."

"What? Oh—oh, yes. I'll come at once, Anna."

Anna hurried off, and Mary prepared to follow her.

"I hope we don't have to let her go," she said as she went out. She had not realized how tedious her days had been until Anna Smoll took over most of the housework.

After her mother had gone, Julia sank down on the footstool. She planted her elbows on her knees and propped her chin in her hands. "And this is Julia Livingston," she derided herself. "One of the Beltrami girls." While Gabrielle practised and worked and built up for a promising future, she, Julia, had lost her grip even on the humdrum level of office work. She was aiming too low, she thought. She must work on a creative basis, where she would not be at the

mercy of an employer's whim. But that was premature—she needed work and money now. She had to have the means to create, since she had no inherent talent to draw upon. That meant West River College. Oh, well——

The depression swept James along its downward course. Cases dropped off; fees took a substantial cut.

"Guess I'll have to cut down on my liquor if this keeps up," he remarked to his wife.

Mary watched him measure Scotch into a glass. "You're drinking more." It was the old story. Whenever there were difficulties, whenever there was something to be faced, James drank more. It was years since she had made the slightest effort to stop him. Their relations were not at a level where her wishes had any weight with James. She couldn't coerce him, and he wouldn't do it for love.

He shot soda after the whisky and held the glass to the light. "Here's to prosperity," he said.

Mary watched him moodily. They were alone in the living-room. Jimmy and Julia had gone out. The other children were either upstairs or in the library. It was unusual for them to find themselves alone in one of the public rooms.

"Julia's going to call West River College to-morrow," she announced. "About a job."

"Julia's a plugger," James commented.

"I wonder where it will all end," Mary sighed. "I suppose Anna will have to go, and Jimmy quit school. And Gabrielle—those expensive lessons."

They never failed to rankle with Mary, who rarely heard Gabrielle sing a note that made sense to her. Since Gabrielle was needed less and less to help in the kitchen, her nose was always buried in a book, or she was poring over music, or studying languages. So far as Mary could see, it added up to nothing. It never would add up to anything. James felt differently about Gabrielle's training. He insisted that she should be helped and never hindered in anything she wished to do. He knew Gabrielle well enough to realize that she would not take advantage of any other member of the family. Her pride forbade her to accept too many favours without payment. He urged Mary to see that she got sufficient rest.

"Rest!" scoffed Mary. "While the others do her share. What about me? What's this all leading up to, James?"

James picked a magazine from the rack beside his chair. "Why worry, Mary? We've still got nearly four thousand dollars in the bank."

Mary sighed. That was James all over. As long as there was a dollar in the bank, no one needed to worry. What quirk of inheritance or upbringing made James so much different from herself? Worry, debts, petty economies were so much water under the bridge to him, while she fretted and economized and sometimes worked herself into a frenzy of anxiety. Well, she had tried to change him. She still made inadequate, half-hearted attempts, but he eluded her as completely as if she had never been his wife. She turned from him impatiently, both angry at him and discouraged at her impotence.

Mary was being difficult these days, James decided. She resented everything—the large house, the children's noise, the constant care of David, Gabrielle's singing. With a familiar pang of dismay he hoped that she was not pregnant again.

"I wouldn't be without one of these youngsters," he told her, "but I wouldn't care for any more."

"I'm not pregnant," said Mary. "Kit told me I wouldn't be——"

James sighed with relief. "Well—thank goodness. I don't know what's the matter with you, Mary, but I think we'd all appreciate it if you'd contrive to be more cheerful."

"I'm tired," Mary said. She pushed a hairpin into a large knot of dull gold hair at the back of her head. Something weary about the gesture arrested his attention. Why shouldn't she be tired? All these children. The large rambling house to care for. The constant pandemonium. The strong personality of Julia pressing in on them, stirring up discord among the little ones. He smiled and shrugged—even his own defections.

His sympathies encompassed the picture, but for the life of him he could not convey any warmth to Mary. He had been away from her too long, mentally, yes, and physically, too. Their sexual relationship was a matter of necessity, not of joy or love. The trouble was—the vital spark had been missing from the beginning. Mary had stood aloof from him in spite of her fecundity. He had excused her at first. She had been young and untutored in any expectation of the simplest marriage rite. But she had not changed. She remained unresponsive. He began to discover other things about her, too. Her intellectual education had been sadly neglected. Her tastes in reading, music, current events were superficial and indiscriminate. She possessed no conversational gift. Her interest narrowed to her home and children. As he grew older, James wondered at himself that there had once been a time when her good looks had blinded him to these more important imperfections. Well, that was the way with the

young—— They never followed a premise to its logical conclusion. He sighed. To-night he took no intricate paths to the dénouement that mental companionship might have saved himself and Mary from the bleak impasse they had reached.

He carried the vision of Mary's resigned, uninterested face to the library with him. There was always consolation for him there. The ghosts of the past and—— He grinned wryly at the brandy decanter. He hadn't meant to have another drink to-night. But he poured himself a stiff brandy and drank it straight.

The house was quiet. The fire was dead in the grate. He poured himself another brandy. This he sipped slowly. With his head resting against the leather back of the sofa, he sought a measure of escape from the sudden burden of marital defeat. At least between them they had produced an alert and individualistic family. His spirits rebounded quickly. The very thought of his children was a tonic.

He nodded mockingly to Ann Severs, remote upon the wall. Julia had taken away Gabrielle Le Duc from him, and he missed her warmth and approbation. But Ann Severs piqued him, put him on his mettle.

"I don't think you like me very well," he told her. "And I don't care much about you either. But we all keep the strain moving, and I guess that's what we're here for."

He chuckled, and hummed an old Sunday school refrain, "'You your small corner, and I in mine.'"

14

THE next morning Julia telephoned Howard Renville. His answering voice was cordial. A record clerk's job was vacant. Would she care to apply for the position? Yes, she would. Julia's hand clung to the receiver as she replaced it on its hook. Secretly she had hoped for a rebuff. Now she had no alternative but to go ahead.

The house was quiet. Julia found the living-room silent and chilly. A thin film of dust covered the furniture. Ashes overflowed the grate in the fireplace. Julia shivered. Her glance met the eyes of the first Gabrielle, serene in her golden frame.

Julia sat down, facing the picture. The brown and smiling eyes above the mantel held her. There was something steadying about them. "You seem alive," Julia thought, "and you've been dead a lifetime." She frowned. "I wonder what you'd have done to Howard Renville?"

She knew. The first Gabrielle would have had no need of weapons. Her own self would have been a barrier that Renville could not have passed. It was not fear of the man that Julia felt. It was too nameless and elusory a feeling to be given so forthright a name. His influence was a creeping vine that grew and grew around her whenever she was close to him. And she was not alone. Everyone in the office shared her reactions to his domination.

Anna Smoll clumped into the room. She carried the vacuum cleaner and a dust mop.

"Oh, Miss Julia, you here?"

"I seem to be." Julia stretched to her feet. "But I'll get out of your way now."

She went up to her room. It was warmer there and much more cheerful. Gabrielle had made the bed and dusted before she went to school. Julia exchanged her dress for a wool bath-robe. She sat down before the dressing-table and began to cream her face. She took stock of herself in the mirror. Her skin was good—clear and faintly glowing; her features were excellent. She had allowed her hair to grow; the broken, brittle ends had been carefully creamed and oiled.

She had to work for perfection, and she knew it. She was not inherently immaculate like Gabrielle and Elle. She was too easily thrown off balance. Her poise was rocky because of the violence of her emotions. She told herself realistically, "I've got to be perfectly turned out, perfectly poised to face that man. But not only him. Everybody." She groaned inwardly. "I've not only got work on my hands. I've got a struggle."

When Julia put in her appearance at the registrar's office, the light in Renville's eyes retreated.

"You've changed—somewhat, Julia."

"For the better, I hope."

Neat eyebrows dented a smooth forehead.

"We don't need semi-glamour girls, Julia. Besides, you look older."

"One does," said Julia, her head high.

Renville's face stiffened. "Yes, one does."

Julia felt her forces weakening. Extraordinary the effect the man

had on her assurance. Resolutely she squared her shoulders. But she compromised. "I was glad to hear about the job," she said.

Renville relaxed. This was better. The king and his subject. "Oh, yes. Jobs don't grow on every bush these days. I spoke to Mr. Carver about you. He wants to talk to you."

Julia's spirits soared. "Oh, of course! Mr. Carver hires the record clerks." Her smile flashed briefly. "Thank you, Mr. Renville."

His automatic answering smile faded as Julia hurried from his office. Joseph Carver greeted her amiably. He leaned back in his chair and shoved his hands into his pockets. Julia liked him. He was an easy-going young man, his ways and manners pleasant; but beneath his unruffled calm lurked a pugnacious stubbornness that, once aroused, was indomitable.

"Well, Julia, I suppose Howard told you I have a job for you?"

Julia smiled. "He said he had a job for me, but that you wanted to talk to me about it."

Carver's eyes were curiously intent; they were a darker, more salient blue than they had been a moment before.

"I believe we understand each other, Julia. Do you think you'll like being a record clerk?"

"I think so. And thank the gods that be, it won't be filing!"

Carver grinned. When he smiled, he looked much younger than his thirty years. "Can't say I blame you there."

He told her that the salary would be seventy-five dollars a month with a five-dollar-a-month rise every year, providing she earned it. The maximum would be eighty-five. It was agreed that Julia should start on Monday.

She left the college grounds without the complete sense of defeat she had felt coming in. Christmas was in the air. She had a job. She would work for Carver, not directly for Renville. Things might be worse.

That evening Rufus Drake delivered a Christmas gift to Julia and reported himself as one of the unemployed. "The Drakes, my dear Julia," he said, "have nothing but the shirts on their backs."

Julia had heard that the October stock market crash had sent the brokerage firm of Rufus Drake Senior to the wall, wiping out his personal fortune as well. Two million dollars cleaned slick as a whistle. The name of Rufus Drake scraped from the tall windows that had mirrored his business for two generations.

She stared now at the gaily wrapped package in her lap. "You don't seem much concerned."

Her upward glance was too late to catch the naked fear in Rufus' eyes. His eyelids closed over it, lifted to serenity. "I don't wear my heart on my sleeve," he said.

Julia said, not knowing quite what to say, "You should be able to get a job. Your father knows all the important people."

"Knew. It makes a difference." He laughed easily. "Aren't you going to open your present?"

"If you don't mind, I'd like to save it for Christmas Eve. We open our presents then."

"Of course not." But he felt empty. He thought of the huge brick house that would hold no cheer this Christmas Eve. His mother had made no pretence. She had said to his father, "Rufus, I've always had money. At my age, I can't begin to do without it."

With sudden warning, Rufus Junior wondered if Julia, given the same circumstances, wouldn't be like that, too. He stood up quickly. "I'll be on my way, Julia. I'll call you when—when I'm on my feet again."

"You needn't leave so soon."

But he was eager to be gone. "I must." He smiled down at her, into the raised eyes, blue and sombre between their dark frame of lashes. "Good night, and merry Christmas, Julia."

As the hall door closed behind him, Gabrielle came down the stairs. "Who was that?" she asked.

"Rufus Drake."

"Oh, I wish I'd come down sooner. I'd like to see what he looks like." She touched his gift with light fingers. "What a lovely package!"

"His last extravagance," Julia commented, turning to enter the living-room.

"What do you mean?"

"The Drakes are broke. Flat. Poor Rufus! He's never worked a day in his life." She laid the blue and silver package beneath the tree.

Gabrielle gazed down at its fragile beauty. "Broke—— I can't believe it. But they had millions——"

"Well, we had plenty once, too."

"But never that much."

Gabrielle wandered to the piano and picked aimlessly at the keys. "I wonder how Uncle Raleigh's fortune stood the crash."

Julia leaned over the back of a chair. "I've wondered that all along. Wouldn't Elle be burned up if she had to cancel her round-the-world tour? And maybe get a job."

"Father had a letter from her yesterday. She's in Iran."

"Heavens! Where's that?"

"Why, Julia Livingston, I'm ashamed of you! Iran is Persia, of course." She sighed dreamily. "I always thought Persia had such a romantic sound."

Julia caught the wistful note in Gabrielle's voice. She looked at her with quick perception. Gabrielle was developing fast. She was growing. Her speech was losing its childish brevity. She spoke more thoughtfully, with musical inflexions, with a better choice of words. Slang clung to all their conversation, but Gabrielle was instinctively sheering away from the lingo fostered by Jimmy. The influence of Dumas, no doubt, Julia decided.

"How is that fine music teacher of yours weathering the depression?" she asked. "It must affect his lessons."

Gabrielle's face went blank with surprise. Then she laughed. "Paul Dumas and the depression! Why, Julia, he scarcely knows there is such a thing!"

"Goodness! What is his recipe for life?" demanded Julia tartly. "I'd like to know."

Gabrielle, she thought bitterly, seemed to be moving into a mental plane that was beyond her older sister's ken. Her career, too, stepped ahead while Julia pattered with files and records. Consumed with sharp, blinding jealousy, Julia busied herself in a book. She couldn't bear the sight of her sister, already showing the promise of feminine charm as well as talent.

15

AS the months trudged dismally on, Paul Dumas lost no money; he felt no want. His prosperity went deeper into living; he thought or knew no lack. He practised the philosophy that there was plenty for everyone; and he worked hard for his own share. He was doubly endowed—with all he needed of this world's goods and with the riches of an inner development both in music and the processes of diurnal living. His days were full and brimming over. He had many friends in all the musical centres of America, but in spite of his delight in congenial company, he kept himself clear of social chains,

The greater part of his day was devoted to practice, to study, to his pupils. He was still possessed of the humble spirit that impelled him to work incessantly. None of his pupils would ever be so arduous.

Gabrielle, closely attached to her family, studying a precious fleeting hour a week with Dumas, sensed the difference between his life and that of the Livingstons. Theirs was a more bitter world. A world of ways and means, with each of them absorbed in the petty problems of the day, unable to elude the strangling chains of thinly stretching pay cheques and minor jobs which left them dissatisfied and uneasy. Only James had a larger interpretation of living.

Being Livingstons, they expected something better of life, and therefore were less well-off than hosts of others who accepted the depression and their ill-luck with a sense of inevitability. Gabrielle was torn in both directions. She felt the small stings of her daily existence; yet more and more was accepting the philosophy of Paul Dumas. This freed her mind for greater effort, enabled her to live on a calmer level.

After the first of the year, she was thrust into an unbelievable sense of loss, when Paul Dumas informed her regretfully that he would have to discontinue her lessons until the last of June.

"I'm going on a concert tour through the East, Gabrielle."

Gabrielle looked around the familiar music-room. "Until June!"

"I'm sorry, too, my dear. But you'll be busy. This is your last year in high school. There will be the class play, parties, exams, commencement."

"But not the operetta?" she asked wishfully. He had already denied her this, but Gabrielle still longed to fulfil her simple ambition.

"Not the operetta," he repeated firmly. "You must sing only your scales until I return. Then in June, we'll take up your voice lessons in earnest."

"Oh, good!" There were times when Gabrielle felt that she would fly to pieces if she were not allowed to use her voice outside of the dreadful routine of scales. Yet she knew that Dumas was right; that she was only doing what everyone who had ever mattered in musical circles had done before her.

Dumas smiled, his understanding reaching to her from his own student days. "In the meantime," he reminded her, "I'd like you to practise the opera scores and to study your French and Italian diligently."

"I will," Gabrielle promised.

So Paul Dumas walked out of Gabrielle's life for the winter months, but in spite of his absence the days and weeks flew into the past. Her

studies were heavy, her extra hours of piano, French, and Italian crowded her leisure to a minimum. Yet she managed to squeeze in two nights of club activities and an occasional party. Altogether it was one of the happiest years of her life. Her inability to appear in the high school operetta was her greatest disappointment, but of this she seldom spoke.

In June, Gabrielle, young, warm-skinned, her body misty in white, was graduated from high school. She turned regretfully from the excitement of commencement night to the comparative inactivity of the next morning.

"I feel queer," she told her father. "As if I'd lost part of me somewhere."

James said, "You have, Gabrielle. You can't go back, you know. She sighed. "I suppose I shouldn't want to."

She could always talk to James and be sure of perfect understanding. He was not wholly convinced yet that Gabrielle was going to have a superlative talent, but remembering Dumas' words, he withheld judgment. Certainly there were few signs of a developing gift aside from the enormous amount of spade work she did, but that, he knew, was the history of music. If there were the slightest chance of greatness for his second daughter, he was willing to give her every chance to reach it. Occasionally he thought it would be nice to have her sing around the house, as she used to do.

"What's the use of having a voice if you can't sing *Annie Laurie*?" Jimmy giped her one day when the family had embarked on one of its spasmodic outbursts of song, led by the smaller members of the group.

"One doesn't squander pearls before swine," sniffed Julia.

Gabrielle had flashed angrily, "Don't you think I want to sing like the rest of you——"

"Don't take it so hard," James interrupted. "You'll have to thicken your skin, my dear."

The evening after commencement Gabrielle had her first real date. Timothy Sayre took her to the A and B Senior party in the school gymnasium. She had gone to mixed parties before, but they had been casual affairs where the girls and boys paired off for dances and for supper, but where they went home in groups rather than couples. Gabrielle had been singularly free of schoolgirl crushes. The demand of her music had shut her off from the free time she might have given to dalliance. Besides, her association with Kit, Mr. Dumas, and her father had relegated sex to a place of minor importance in her

existence. Indeed, she was scarcely aware of sex in its intimate application.

But on this night she was all anticipation, her heart high and singing as she drew the white graduation dress over her head. A new dress, sheer stockings, crêpe slippers. And a beau!

"Extravagance! Extravagance! We'll end in the poor-house or I miss my guess!" Mary had grumbled, but James had insisted on all these purchases. The light on Gabrielle's face had been reward enough for him.

When Timothy Sayre called for Gabrielle, he was not just a good-looking boy. He was not Timothy, modern, young; he was Sir Launcelot, Robin Hood, Galahad! He never would have believed it, but Gabrielle's breathless fancy covered them both.

It was a gay evening. Streamers of lavender, pale yellow, soft rose, dotted with Japanese lanterns, sheathed the gymnasium in spring. Dancing first with Timothy, Gabrielle thought, "This is fairyland, and at twelve o'clock all this will vanish——"

Someone tapped Timothy on the shoulder. "Cut."

Gabrielle found herself crushed against the coat of her class president.

"Where've you been all my life?" Bud Arvid wanted to know.

"Just under your nose," gasped Gabrielle.

By the time Dale Colman rescued her, the magic of the lanterns had dimmed. But Dale waltzed with unexpected grace, and Cinderella came into her own again.

The glass slipper, however, was not lost upon the stairs. The last dance caught Gabrielle unaware. She was trying desperately to keep away from her partner's feet when a glowering Timothy claimed her.

"Beat it!" he ordered Regs Smith. "This is mine."

They finished *Home, Sweet Home* together.

"Having a good time?" Timothy asked.

Gabrielle nodded. This was the end of school, but the beginning of everything, she thought, conscious of the pressure of Timothy's arms around her, of the look in his eyes as he sought to reach some instinct in her. But the moment of awareness had not yet come. To the last strains of music it was of Paul Dumas of whom she thought, of her work for the next day.

As they left the floor, Gabrielle glanced down at her slippers. "Look," she wailed. "Look what that Regs did to my shoes!"

Timothy whistled, "Holy mike!" He laughed. "That guy sure knew how to save his own feet."

UPON Dumas' return to Riverside, he and Gabrielle embarked on a strenuous schedule of voice instruction. Accompanying her while she sang the melodic minor scales and then an arpeggio, he listened with approval to the clarity and sweetness of her voice.

When she had finished he said, "Good work! Run through that arpeggio again."

At the end of the arpeggio, Dumas requested, "You know the Brahms' *Lullaby*, don't you? Sing that for me."

Gabrielle complied, singing the simple melody with finesse and unusual understanding.

As he turned from the piano, a smile warmed Dumas' face. He praised her quietly, "Your legato is true. Your vocal balance is unusually good. Your voice has latent power. I think you can go beyond the concert field."

"Opera?" breathed Gabrielle.

He nodded. "It's quite possible, with sufficient work and study." He jumped to his feet and strode across the room and back. "You have the makings of an outstanding coloratura soprano. Your lower range has all the warmth of a contralto; your acute soprano is superb."

He sat down on the piano bench. "But, Gabrielle, we will be brief about your future. To-day we must perfect your breathing, your phrasing, your ornament. Your execution must be flawless. That's what we have to work for."

Gabrielle listened attentively. "Can I sing them all—*Carmen*, *Aida*——"

"Ah, and *Mimi*—*Manon*!" Then he laughed. "But slowly, Gabrielle, slowly. Your work must be round and full and sweet. Not a perfect solo, not a perfect performance, but a perfect note. You understand?" As she nodded, he added, "And one thing more. You must give me more time, Gabrielle. Three nights a week should be the minimum."

She exclaimed in alarm, "But I can't really afford one."

His face sharpened. "Then you must come anyway," he said decisively. "Four dollars for three hours will do very nicely."

She shook her head. "No, really, I'd rather not do that."

"My dear child, I can afford it."

Her mouth was a firm line, unyielding, with a stubbornness she sometimes had. "But I can't. You're most kind. But I have to pay my own way."

He was touched by her childish formality. "Very well," he agreed. "We'll leave the price as it was. You can keep an account book if you like and pay me when you can. Let me tell you, four dollars is pin money compared to what you are going to earn some day."

Her distress flamed over her face. Her mother's constant reminders rang in her ears. "I'm afraid of debts," she said.

He leaned over and took her hands in his. They lay, thin and graceful, against his palms.

"Fear!" he scoffed. "That isn't the emotion for an artist to feel. Fear blocks the way to progress, bows the head to every sort of evil. War, poverty, disease, failure. Why should you feel fear? Least of all, about money? It's only a medium of exchange. It doesn't mean happiness or success. It needn't affect a gift like yours. Work is what matters to you, Gabrielle, your own will to work. One doesn't measure art in terms of dollars and cents."

She was silent, the confusion dying gradually from her eyes. "Very well, Mr. Dumas." She laughed a little. "I'll keep an account book."

In the months that followed, Gabrielle worked with fresh zest and direction. She had little time to herself. During the day she sought work; in the evenings she studied or went to the Dumas home for lessons. Her vocal exercises distracted the family. They were more tolerant of the songs she was now permitted to practise, although Jimmy made fun of her constant use of foreign languages. "Who can understand such stuff?" he demanded when she had finished *Il Bacio*.

Gabrielle smiled at him and repeated the song. She could not hope to make Jimmy understand the delight her music gave her. Her search for work was less successful. The best she could do was a part-time clerking job in the hosiery department of the Chambers' department store—one of the largest shops in the city, with a wide range of customers. She was taken on merely because of the Christmas rush.

It was not the job that Gabrielle would have chosen for herself. The flagrant rudeness of the Christmas shoppers appalled her. The work was a physical and nervous drain on her. The long hours of standing and walking pulled her weight down ten pounds in two weeks. The effect on her voice was marked.

Dumas cancelled her lessons for the next month and ordered her not to sing a note. But she confided to James on Christmas Day that at least it helped to pay her bill. In bath-robe and slippers, she was seated at the black-front desk in the library, going over her account book, deducting her payments from her charges, while her father worked a crossword puzzle. She was appalled at the size of the mounting column of figures. Her conclusions were discouraging.

"He told me not to worry," she said aloud, "but I simply have to earn some money."

"I'm sorry I can't help you more—" James began.

She brushed quickly into his pause. "You've helped me enough, father." She closed her account book, turned to him. "How are cases?" she asked.

"Rotten." He smiled. "People aren't even getting divorces during the depression."

David banged into the room, shouting, "Here's Uncle Kit! Here's Uncle Kit!"

Kit's glance met theirs over an armful of packages. His big frame, his steady eyes, always brought reassurance into the house. He nodded to James first, but his gaze kindled as it rested on Gabrielle. "Merry Christmas," he hailed them. "Sorry I couldn't make it last night."

David, stretching up in solemn sturdiness, whooped over an enormous tank that growled and shot its way across the floor. David was the mechanical fiend of the family. Anything with cogs, bolts and the power of propulsion kept him absorbed for hours. Kit knew that only the most intricate and workable mechanical toy need be offered to this young critic.

"Oh, Kit, the perfect gift!" Gabrielle's fingers moved eagerly through a portfolio of Wagner's operas.

"You're far too generous to this family," James commented, as he unwrapped a smoking-jacket and two quarts of Sparkling Burgundy for himself. "You're always showering us with favours, Kit."

"It's a purely selfish pastime, James. Bachelors have to find their own families. Where's everybody else? I never expect to come upon fewer than five persons in a room in this house at any one time."

"We do herd," Gabrielle agreed. "It's a Livingston trait. Sue's in the kitchen. Rene's practising dancing steps. That girl has wings on her feet. They're all scattered about. Shall I call them?"

"Oh, no. I'll put the rest of these packages under the tree. They can have them in their own good time."

He went into the living-room with the familiarity of a member of the family and returned just in time to watch the cork pop from one of the Burgundy bottles.

"A toast," James proposed when tall goblets imprisoned the wine's rich flame.

"To Kit," said Gabrielle. "A long life and a happy one!"

Kit's devotion warmed them all. Although Julia was the least responsive, he knew how to handle every member of the family, including Mary, for whom he had genuine sympathy and understanding. Kit's nature was more akin to Mary's than it was to the more dashing Livingston strain. Although he had studied medicine in Vienna, he had kept his roots firmly planted in Minnesota. He was interested primarily in human nature, and his medical practice had given him an eye for detail which made him a sympathetic listener. Gabrielle always had the feeling that Kit was the one person to whom she could fully unburden herself on almost any subject.

She scrutinized him now—his rugged frame and thick blond hair, his thin, muscular fingers and slow poise. It was hard to believe that Aunt Elle could have played a part in his romantic destiny. She wondered now if it was actually because of Elle that he had never married. Kit, thought Gabrielle, was the type of man that any woman might wish to marry, sure of his devotion and steadiness. If that was what really mattered. Her growing consciousness of the rush of life around her made her more dubious now of the stock sentiments that Mary had been enunciating off and on over the years.

James and David left Kit and Gabrielle alone in the library. The room was warm with intimacy—a fire burning in the grate, its windows gay with holly wreaths; the floor littered with gift wrappings—starry paper, silver ribbons.

Gabrielle, Kit thought, looked young and defenceless in the simplicity of her red robe, her bare ankles visible over the tops of her slippers.

"How's the saleslady?" His tone was light, but his glance was steady and penetrating.

Gabrielle's nose wrinkled. "Dead from the feet up."

Kit nodded. "It's perfectly obvious. I saw Dumas last week. He doesn't like what you're doing. It isn't going to help your voice, Gabrielle."

"Oh, it's only that I shouldn't sing when I'm so tired. I haven't even wanted to sing lately."

Kit studied her closely. Dr. Christopher Roberts, she thought.

"You shouldn't be so tired," he told her.

"But you said there was nothing wrong with me."

"There isn't. Not fundamentally. But you're underweight and your hemoglobin is too slow. Are you eating as I told you to?"

She nodded. "Exactly. But I have to work, Kit. Sometimes I get discouraged. There's so much to be done. I'm getting nowhere, really. The languages are a grind. French and Italian aren't so bad, but German——! I'm so tired, Kit."

"You're tired because you're under par, Gabrielle. Music is a total career in itself. You're trying to do everything at once. You have a real job ahead of you and you must keep up the physical end. You have everything else that is needed. Dumas is sure of it. And his judgment is sound."

"The money is what worries me now," Gabrielle reiterated wearily.

"You sound like your mother."

"I suppose the debt doldrums are infectious."

"Your father's philosophy would be much better for you." Kit leaned his blond head against the leather chair. "Anyway, Gabrielle, since work you feel you must, Dr. Cameron, in the Medical building, needs a stenographer. He has a technician, but his books and office work are getting too heavy for her to handle. It would involve a good deal of work, but it would be pleasant and steady. Cameron's a good sort. You might like it."

"Kit, I'd love it."

"Suppose you call at his office then. Say—at nine Tuesday morning. I'll let him know you're coming."

"You always seem to figure in the destiny of our family, Kit."

The door opened. Julia paused on the threshold. "Oh, a *tête-à-tête*," she murmured.

Kit had risen to his feet, "Merry Christmas, Julia. Why not join us?"

"No, I just came to thank you for the perfume."

"I hope it's the kind that expresses you best, Julia."

"It's perfect."

"See what I got!" Gabrielle, cheeks glowing, displayed the portfolio.

Julia's frigidity dropped another degree. "Lovely," she commented. Her glance fell on the empty goblets, and the wine-bottles in the liquor-cabinet. "I see we're having a drinking Christmas."

"Since when did you go on the water wagon?" asked Gabrielle.

"Those are your father's," Kit told her, his eyebrows faintly drawn. "I'm sure he wouldn't mind if you had some."

"No, thank you." She turned toward the door. "I'll see you at dinner."

Julia whisked away, leaving the faint shadow of annoyance behind her. Kit looked across at Gabrielle, thinking that she warmed him to the core, where Julia left him chilled. Gabrielle filled his thoughts more and more, but not Gabrielle the child any longer. Conscious of her flowering womanhood, he felt that his paternalism was wearing thin. He was swept by a sudden longing to take her in his arms. But instead he walked out of the room in the wake of Julia.

17

GABRIELLE liked Dr. Cameron. He was Christopher's age—a short, round man, slow, his calm a telegraphic cure, his cheerfulness lacking force or compulsion but twinkling and stable. Except for a subdued laughter in his eyes, he was matter-of-fact and businesslike. He gave her to understand that for a salary of eighty dollars a month, he demanded efficiency and neatness. "I might add pleasantness," he said. "I like agreeable people, attractive people. I think you'll do, Miss Livingston. Now, how do you feel about it?"

Gabrielle's hesitation was fractional. "It sounds all right to me," she said.

When she reported to the family at dinner, she was taken aback by the trend of their approbation.

"It's about time," Mary declared. "I was wondering how long you expected us to pay your bills."

"I got a job as quick as I could."

"How much are you getting?" asked James.

"Eighty a month."

"Eighty!" exclaimed Julia. "And you expect that to put you through opera."

"Well, it'll help," Gabrielle retorted.

"Just because you can sing," Mary said, "don't think that lets you out of paying board and room."

"Looks like you're on your own, kid," said Timmv.

"Watch out, Gabrielle," James warned, "the wolves will get you."
"Wuff, wuff!" said David.

With her new position, her life settled into a regular schedule of waking, eating, working, sleeping. She had little time for diversion. Once in a while, she went to a movie with Timothy Sayre. Whenever he could, Kit took her to the Sunday Symphony concerts; and once she attended an artist's concert. Gabrielle's delight in these musical excursions pleased Kit beyond reason. He was surprised that anyone's enjoyment could touch so clear a spring of sentiment within him.

Her voice lessons and six dollars to her father for room and board cut deeply into Gabrielle's weekly salary. Besides, she was not cancelling any of the accumulated Dumas debt.

James found her again one evening staring in despair at the small black ledger. It gave him a genuine pang that she should be cramped for lack of money. A definite need such as hers he could understand, but neither his difficulties nor his love of good living could persuade him that money was worth the frantic concern most people gave it.

"Father, I simply can't make ends meet," said Gabrielle.

"Which of us can? But why worry about it so dreadfully? Suppose you consider the one lesson I don't have to pay for, as the equivalent of a week's room and board. Would that help any?"

"Oh, I couldn't do that. The family would run me out of the house."

"I'm still the head of this household."

"I know that. But I can't do it. I'll have to cancel one lesson a week."

"Sometimes, Gabrielle, you exasperate me beyond reason. Your stubborn streak is as bad as Julia's lack of humour." James retired behind a newspaper.

But as the weeks went on, Gabrielle's life progressed along more satisfactory lines. Her independence gave her assurance. Her worries diminished. She liked her work in Dr. Cameron's office, although constantly baffled by the antagonism of his technician, Vera Middlemist. In time she came to the conclusion that the girl was in love with her employer and frantically jealous of any outsider.

It was somewhat difficult for Gabrielle to regard the rotund Dr. Cameron as a romantic figure. She caught herself scrutinizing the photographs of Mrs. Cameron and eleven-year-old Stuart Cameron that flanked the doctor's desk. She could not bring herself to like Mrs. Cameron's peaked face or her thin mouth. Yet she was pretty

in a fine-drawn way. The boy was much like his father—chubby, with mischief curving his mouth.

"Someone is going to get hurt," Gabrielle decided, as she watched Vera's white uniformed figure bending over a rack of test tubes. "And I don't think it's going to be Mrs. Cameron."

On the whole, however, she was far too busy to give much attention to the private life of her employer. Spring came, then summer, and rushing upon her, fall. September, and Paul Dumas completed arrangements for a South American tour. Once more he bade Gabrielle a regretful good-bye. He left a sheaf of notes for her and a portfolio of music.

More than the other parting, Gabrielle dreaded this second one. Nearly a year would pass before she saw Dumas' lean height and crisp grey hair again. Nearly a year in which to pilot her ambition alone. Gabrielle was cognizant now of the gathering force of her gift. She was passing from the elementary stages to more mature development, but she leaned on Dumas as if he alone had control of her voice.

Tears brimmed from her eyes, spilled down her cheeks as she watched him climb the steps of the coach at the station. "Don't go!" her mind called frantically. "Don't go!" But the next moment he was gone, a trail of smoke curling back over the train to the misty-eyed Gabrielle.

For the first time in her life she had the sense of being completely on her own. Growing within her was the conviction that in her voice she had a gift that would perish if she did not meet the standards laid down by Dumas. Her family, close-knit though they were, could do nothing to help her with the massive amount of work that lay ahead, the endless hours of practice. If anything, they held her back, distracted her with their demands. Julia, in particular, kept up a running fire of criticism. Yet in her less strained moments, she knew she wouldn't be without them for any career or success. They were a balancing wheel that kept her from going overboard about her voice, from seeing herself in too grandiose a light.

In one way only did Dumas' absence help her a great deal. She was able to put aside enough money to pay her debt to him in full. She started the new year out of the red.

"Now maybe I can get some decent clothes," she remarked to Julia.

Julia's narrowed glance followed Gabrielle's profile in the mirror and returned to the stocking she was darning. "Ma wants us to pay more board."

"More board! How much?"

"Seven a week. I told her I'd do it if you would. But I'd be darned if I would otherwise."

"I don't see how I can," said Gabrielle.

"You make as much as I do."

Gabrielle flushed uncomfortably. "Didn't you get a rise?"

"Rise? Don't make me laugh. I'm lucky to have a job."

"I thought the academic world was doing all right in spite of the depression."

"'Was' is right. Because they were out of work, people used their savings to go to college. Now they're out of work and out of money, too. So where do they go from here?"

Gabrielle patted witch hazel over her face. "It's too bad West River doesn't give a law course. You would have another student and Jimmy would save a lot of transportation money."

"Oh, the bus fare doesn't amount to much. Anyway—— What's one person more or less?"

"One plus one," Gabrielle remarked, "can mount up to an enormous figure."

"Jimmy looks like only one person to me," Julia retorted crossly.

As the depression made itself felt more and more in the West River College enrolment figures, Renville's whip cracked ominously over the heads of his employees. Julia, fighting desperately for her self-respect against this thin-lipped man who seemed torn between reluctant attraction for her and his air of habitual contempt for all things feminine, kept her head higher than the whip. She was polite to Renville but, job or no job, she had made up her mind not to cower or grovel before him. Yet Julia realized with a sense of shock that her attitude was one of the reasons she kept her job, for Renville's authority and power were meat and drink to him. His carefully obscure cruelty was the before-dinner cocktail and the wine that accompanied the meal.

In retaliation, Renville missed no opportunity to criticize and humiliate her. Yet his offences were subtly reluctant—barbed thrusts disguised under a cloak of regret. Their guise rather than their nature infuriated Julia. She knew, however, that a show of temper would mean loss of face and probably loss of her job. So she accepted each dig in a manner thinly edged with graciousness. It was impudence as veiled as Renville's attacks.

The other girls were well aware of Julia's opposition. They backed her privately but never openly. Julia resented their secret approbation. It made her feel that she was carrying the load of spite and perversion

alone. But she found exhilaration in the fact that her bank account was mounting. If she could hold on for a year or two more, she might be able to start some venture of her own.

Julia knew by this time that she would never get far working for someone else. She must strike out in the creative field, or advance some specialty of her own. It was insupportable to her that she had no opportunity whatever to use her initiative; that no one ever consulted her about office affairs. She seethed with thwarted ambition.

In March of 1932, she tossed a coin over her job. Cecilia Wrenn, the information clerk, resigned to be married; and Renville condescendingly offered the position to Julia. It was one of the best in the office. The salary was one hundred and ten dollars a month with a rising scale to one hundred and twenty-five dollars. The work was simple—giving information on all phases of the college life, answering the telephone and distributing bulletins. Above all, it would give her a chance to function as a reasoning human being, rather than as a machine.

But Julia understood that Renville's motives in offering the job to her were not designed to further her career. "He wants me under his thumb. I'll be right outside his door, completely under his jurisdiction. One mistake and he can humiliate me with a word."

She knew that if she did not accept the job, she would never again be offered promotion in the office. Besides, the additional salary would swell her bank account and thus hasten her ultimate leave-taking. Whichever way she turned, Julia struck deep water. "If I don't take it, I might as well quit. If I do take it, I'll probably quit anyway." She took it, and entered upon a period of bitter living that she was to remember for the rest of her life with loathing. The weapons she and Renville used were doubly sheathed; but time and again the sheaths wore thin from so much parrying, and a bared blade struck flesh.

However, this situation spurred her on to competence in her work. She studied her information bulletin diligently. She had to be letter perfect, for if she hesitated before replying to a question, if her answer was incomplete, Renville's authoritative voice took the words right out of her mouth.

Julia's equilibrium wavered under this searing technique from a man she despised. "Sometimes," she confided to a record clerk, "I feel like turning around and yelling, 'Shut up!'"

It was an enigmatic sex battle, with Julia fighting against retreat, forcing herself day by day to meet each new attack without visible

resentment, to remain always cool and pleasant. It was a wearing, contest of wills. Julia could have accepted Renville's attitude with a degree of understanding if he had expressed or intimated a personal liking for her, or wished, indeed, to possess her body. The normality of that desire she could have coped with. But this fight to take possession of her mind and to down her spirit drove her to apprehension and panic.

18

THAT spring Rufus Drake stepped into Julia's life again. He telephoned for a date and with some curiosity she accepted his invitation to go to a movie. She had put Rufus out of her thoughts when his family fortunes crashed. There was no chance of advancement there. Then, too, he had dropped completely out of sight.

To her amazement, Rufus, the tardy and casual, arrived early. He was as handsome, as commanding, as of old. "The same Rufus," she commented, taking his hand.

His grey eyes laughed at her. "Did you expect me to be frayed at the cuffs and down at heel?"

"Not quite. But I thought the depression might have licked you."

"Turn it around," he said. "I licked the depression." He escorted her to a Ford sedan parked at the kerb.

"New?" exclaimed Julia.

"No less."

During the short drive to the theatre, Rufus briefly recounted his adventures for the past two and a half years.

"No job. No money. That was me in 1929, as you no doubt recall. I became a ghost. I haunted employment agencies, shops and offices until I got scared of myself. In desperation I decided that if a job wouldn't come to me, I had to make a job. And where do you, suppose I found it?"

"I couldn't even guess."

"In a chance cookery book."

"Are you crazy?"

"Nope, I'm a candy-maker."

Julia clapped her hand to her mouth. "Rufus! You a—cook,"

"It surprised me, too. But it worked. Now I don't cook any more. I've got beyond that. I sell. We have a small kitchen——"

"We——?"

"The company. Albin Smith and I. We have three candy-makers and a wrapper. Albin handles the office. I do the outside work. You'd never believe what a good salesman I am."

"Yes, I would. I'll believe anything from now on."

After the show, Rufus took her to the Dutch Grill for supper. It was Julia who reopened the subject of his business by asking him what kind of candy he sold.

"Don't tell me you haven't eaten the Hansel and Gretel bar?"

She hesitated. "Why, of course. Caramel and nuts."

The waitress laid steaming plates of chow mein before them.

Julia said, "Isn't the candy market overflowed?"

Rufus shrugged. "Remember the old saw, 'If a man can make a better mouse-trap than his neighbour, the world will beat a path to his door'? Not letter perfect maybe, but——"

"I get you. Where did you get your recipe?"

"From an old cookery book. It belonged to Albin's grandmother."

"And you promoted it?"

Rufus smiled. Without mirth. Without bitterness. But with poignant recollection of the outdistanced hopes and disappointments. Candy boiling in large kettles. Candy cooling on buttered cookie sheets. Candy wrapped in wax paper. The long hours, tramping from store to store, the endless selling talks. There were nights when he thought he would never manage to lift his feet or use his tongue again. Nor was that all. He had to eat and look decently groomed on the most meagre sum of money. Then in a rush came the steady, exhilarating climb.

So Rufus smiled at Julia. "More or less," he said.

"Well, of course, if you don't want to talk about it——"

He laughed and reached over to squeeze her hand. "What is there to say, Julia? Let's talk about you. You're certainly looking like a million dollars."

While she beamed delightedly over his appraisal, Julia thought—how unlike the old Rufus. He would have dramatized himself and his venture to the last detail. She realized that Rufus Drake, stripped of his family fortune, had acquired stamina and enterprise. He was worth hanging on to, she surmised shrewdly.

Back at the Livingston house, she unbuttoned her coat, collected her hat and gloves and started for the door to go upstairs. Her glance

rested for a moment on the idealized Gabrielle above the mantelpiece. Then she looked at Rufus, who was running through a pile of magazines. Intent lines etched her forehead. She thought, "If Rufus Drake can make something out of nothing, why can't I, too?"

Through the hall came Gabrielle in her first evening gown. Rose chiffon drifted about her slender body. Rufus jumped to his feet, adjusting himself quickly to the vision that had replaced Julia.

She smiled softly at him. "You must be Rufus."

"Yes, I'm Rufus. But who are you?"

"I'm Gabrielle."

"Gabrielle. Why haven't I seen you before?"

"I've been hearing about you for years, Rufus. I don't know why we've never met."

He looked from her to the portrait above the fireplace. "You're alike," he said.

Gabrielle coloured. "Won't you sit down?" she asked. Then she, too, glanced at the picture. "Some day I'm going to have a dress like hers," she said.

"When you grow up?"

"I'm eighteen."

"Really?" Rufus' voice was gentle. "If you have a dress like hers"—his blond head nodded toward the first Gabrielle—"have it in yellow taffeta with a violet ribbon around your throat. And I shall send you violets——"

"Such gallantry, Rufus!"

Rufus rose as Julia returned to the room. "Have you been hiding Gabrielle from me?" he inquired easily.

"Why should I?"

Rufus' eyes swung to Gabrielle's perturbed face. "The reason is obvious," he said.

From then on, Rufus called to see Gabrielle, not Julia. He was coolly unembarrassed over his change of personnel. Gabrielle was both pleased and dismayed. Julia was inwardly furious; outwardly nonchalant. In the past she had placed little value on Rufus' attentions. Now he seemed immensely desirable to her.

"Rufus and I never cared for each other," she assured Gabrielle.

The other Livingston children enjoyed the situation. They never failed to taunt Julia about her younger sister. Gabrielle's natural kindness of heart made her disapprove of their direct and juvenile methods. She sincerely admired Julia's capacity to make her own way.

Jimmy teased Julia unmercifully over Rufus' desertion. "What-

ever's going to happen to you?" he said. "No career! No men!"

His impudent face invited a slap, and Julia longed to apply herself to the task of settling Jimmy, who became more insufferable with each passing year. But she had to content herself with the empty medium of words. "I have plenty of men," she retorted, and wished at once she had held her tongue.

"But none of them stick," gibed Jimmy. "Why don't you get some adhesive tape? It comes pretty cheap at any of the cut-rate drug-stores."

Jimmy's heckling helped to swell the tide of panic that washed over Julia. Nothing, absolutely nothing, escaped his humorous eye. All things seemed to fall to Gabrielle, who was unfolding into a feminine loveliness fully perceived by Julia.

She was uncomfortably aware of this when she walked in one night and found Gabrielle at the piano running through the *Unfinished Symphony* and humming softly as she played. Rufus, once the carefree and pleasure-loving young blade, was hanging over her, so intent that Julia was sharply disturbed, watching him.

She knew that she could no longer dismiss Gabrielle as an undeveloped schoolgirl. She was eighteen, physically mature and mentally adult, thanks to the years of study she had put in under Dumas' guidance. Julia did not envy Gabrielle her looks; but she resented her great gift and the growing sophistication that went with it. She had chopped off her own education with a ruthless hand. Now she floundered about in the world of abstractions, seeking for a guiding rope, where Gabrielle was completely at ease on any subject that came up. She was gaining fluency in languages, too. And she was meeting the demands that came her way with unconscious grace, so that Rufus, out of his wide experience with women, said to her the second time he took her out, "I like everything about you, Gabrielle. The way you walk, the way you think, the way your eyes brighten when you laugh. I like your hair and your smile. And you're one thing your sister isn't—kind."

Gabrielle was embarrassed. She never liked to be praised at Julia's expense. But she answered in the same light vein. "I have a bad temper and I'm horribly stubborn."

"Why not?" Rufus laughed at her.

Gabrielle was waiting in the office of the Drake Company that evening while Rufus went over the Saturday morning's mail. It interested her to see him work. It was a fair-sized room, with Rufus' desk and his secretary's occupying the space near the front window.

Albin Smith's and the bookkeeper's desks faced the door that led the shipping room.

"Our office help is at a minimum," Rufus explained. "We've spent most of our money on salesmen and factory help. The first of the year, though, we plan to add a couple of clerks. The work is really getting too much for us."

As he shoved mail folders into a drawer and turned to lock the safe, Gabrielle said, "I'll admit to a consuming interest in your business, Rufus. You've done so much with so little. I've always wondered how things like the candy bars got started. The depression pulled down plenty of people, but look what it did for you! Of course, I didn't know you before," Gabrielle added apologetically, remembering many of Julia's scathing comments on Rufus when she used to go about with him. Her own picture of him was not even remotely identifiable with the other.

As if he had read her thoughts, Rufus turned to her, laughing. "Oh, yes, I understand," he said.

"Won't you tell me about the beginning of your business?" she asked hastily.

Rufus hesitated. He had never dramatized his experiences by talking about them. Yet Gabrielle— As he looked at her, he realized that she was bound so surely to his life that even his past could be shared with her.

He sat down on the edge of the desk. "The company had its beginning in necessity, Gabrielle. Dire necessity." He paused to light a cigarette, and his mind veered backward into time.

"I wasn't a very nice person in the pre-depression era. I thought I was everything. I thought I had everything. But the failure of dad's business knocked the props out from under me. It was like going to sleep in a soft bed and waking up in a nightmare. I'd always spent dollars like pennies, and hoarding the little bit I had after the crash was a new and devastating experience. In all my life—and I marvel at it now—I'd never lacked for a material thing, so you can imagine what a shock hunger was to my stomach."

"Rufus—you weren't actually without food?"

He grinned. "Often. I had to be. I couldn't get a job, and my money had to last for I didn't know how long. It was lucky for me I hung on to it. It started the candy company."

Gabrielle's concerned face disturbed his thoughts. "God, but she's sweet," his heart whispered, and delved deep into a reverence he had felt for no other woman.

"On one of my lowest days," he continued, "Albin invited me to dinner. I knew Albin at the 'U'. The crash had taken him out of school, too, but it hadn't wrecked his family's finances as it had ours." He smiled. "I can still taste that dinner. I ate like a horse. Later in the evening, Mrs. Smith made a batch of fudge. I happened to remark that such good candy ought to be on the market."

His eyes narrowed into memory. "I believe Albin said, 'Fudge is too common. Now if you could get something different——' We just gaped at each other. Then Albin raced for the kitchen and dragged out all the cookery books in the place."

With a certain gaiety and an unexpected amount of reminiscent enjoyment, Rufus told her of his cooking experiments, of his burnt fingers, of the final discovery of the Hansel and Gretel bar. He remapped his first sales campaigns. His briefness gave reality to worn shoes and an empty stomach; it made hard work and failure a heart-ache and a source of pride to Gabrielle. And he lifted courage to success by his humour and his gratitude.

Listening to him, Gabrielle thought, "He's grown taller to me."

When he had finished, she said, "Rufus, I'm proud to know you."

He stared at her. "Why, Gabrielle——" He went to her quickly and lifted her into his arms. He kissed her with a gentleness that was entirely new to him.

Both his arms and his caress were within the realm of Gabrielle's understanding. They possessed the quality of affection that had surrounded her all her life, that she got from her father, from Kit, from Dumas. Making no demands. Scarcely rippling the smooth current of her emotions. She responded to them now with the same instinctive appreciation.

Rufus held her close. "Whoever would have guessed," he said, his cheek against her hair, "that I'd thank God for the prosperity that was just around the corner?"

19

PAUL DUMAS listened with closed eyes while Gabrielle played *O luce di quest anima*, and watched her alertly while she switched her music and went into *Non mi der* from *Don Giovanni* and from there to *Dove sono*.

He praised her unstintingly, sitting back in his chair, his fingers interlocked, his grey eyes searching her face with penetration. "Excellent, Gabrielle. Excellent, indeed. Your technique is better than I could have hoped. And now"—he motioned her away from the piano seat—"suppose you run through your scales for me. First the majors."

Again he was pleased. Her vocalization was full-toned, round and sweet. "Good work there," he approved.

When she had finished the harmonic minors, she sang her daily exercise. After that, Dumas asked for *Batti, batti*. She sang it lightly and bewitchingly, her voice as flexible as the tones of a violin. "Lovely, Gabrielle," he conceded, sinking back with a sigh of satisfaction.

He had wondered when he left if she might not slip away from the standards he had set for her, because of her other activities, but it was quite apparent that there had been real growth on the technical side. Unquestionably she had worked hard. Her chief flaw now lay in her lack of emotional depth and understanding. That would come with time and experience.

While Gabrielle rested Dumas outlined his immediate plans for her. "We might start with *Non mi der* and Gretel's folk-song from *Hänsel und Gretel*. Then the *Dove sono* and *O luce di quest anima*. I want you to sing them as well as you played them. You have all these in the portfolio. We can go over some of them now. The others we'll leave until Wednesday."

Over iced lemonade, served in rainbow-tinted glasses, Dumas told her of his concert tour, which had taken him from Rio de Janeiro to Santiago. He gave her a collection of his programmes, and Gabrielle went through them, entranced, visualizing each place. She noted some of his selections—Tschaikovsky's *Concerto in B Flat Minor*; *Sonata Pathétique*, Beethoven; the *Emperor Concerto in E Flat Major*—

"Shall I ever do anything like this, do you think?" she asked. "It would be marvellous to sing my way about the world."

"Why not, Gabrielle? A concert tour is the *sine qua non* of any prima donna. In one way it's a grind. In another it's illumination itself. I like it for the human contacts, too. Besides, a South American tour is a critical test. Buenos Aires is one of the key spots for music, as you know. You would be interested in the opera-house there. Widows watch the opera through grided boxes. They must not show their sorrowing faces."

Dumas had made the same tour in 1920, and this time he had been a guest at three of the houses that he had visited before. He grew fluent telling Gabrielle of the Spanish hospitality he had encountered, of the responsive audiences, of the Copacabana beach, of the flaming statue of Corcovados dominating the superb harbour of Rio.

"As a musician I warmed to Buenos Aires," he said, "but the most memorable picture of my life will always be that harbour as I sailed away from it in moonlight. Now tell me what you have been doing, Gabrielle," he finished briskly.

Suddenly all that Gabrielle had been doing diminished to such trifling proportions that she was silent. Dr. Cameron's office. The movies with Rufus. His candy bar. Hours at the piano. Hours doing scales and exercises. Hours poring over languages.

Transported by Dumas' talk, Gabrielle touched upon the larger fields that the artist must seek and find. Then her native common sense asserted itself with the thought that the dull road of routine had to be travelled even by the most ambitious; that every star who had thrilled the music-lovers of Buenos Aires had put in dreary hours in lodging-houses, in little side-streets, in poverty, sometimes in ill-health, polishing up the jewel with which they were endowed at birth. At least she had a warm-hearted family whose impatience with her trills and exercises was mitigated by their love for her. In a flash of insight Gabrielle once more acknowledged her debt to the vigorous Livingston clan.

Looking at Dumas, she saw that at heart he was a lonely human being, living among his possessions, keen to detect a flawed note, sharply aware of the small external beauties of living, absorbed in the intricate pattern of secular events, and the ebb and flow of other lives around him, but lacking the balancing wheel of human warmth close to his own life. He had lost that with the death of Marianne. Gabrielle sometimes felt the pressure of his emotional life directed towards her, but his affection was tinctured with such a teacher-to-pupil relationship that it lacked the enveloping warmth she got from Kit, and now from Rufus.

She wondered what Rufus would think of Dumas and decided to ask them both to dinner. Perhaps Kit, too, since he and Dumas were such good friends. Kit's interest in music was the one indulgence he allowed himself outside his busy practice. It was an old taste of his, fostered during his days in Vienna when he and Dumas made full use of the musical facilities of the lovely but fading city.

Mary complained bitterly about the dinner invitations. "We have

enough trouble feeding our own family, Gabrielle, without bringing in strangers."

"Oh, ma," protested Gabrielle. "I'll pay for the food if that worries you. Besides, ma, I like to do something for Paul Dumas once in a while. He does so much for me."

This silenced Mary, who was beginning to realize that Gabrielle's voice was something beyond her own experience. To her untutored ear it was lovely and impressive now, particularly when Gabrielle sang the lyric roles of some of the operas. She could scarcely believe that the years of senseless exercises were bearing such rich and visible results.

But Gabrielle's next lesson went badly. Dumas played *Ich Liebe Dich* for her. Then he asked her to sing Gretel's folk-song. Gabrielle found German more difficult than French and Italian, so that her execution of *Suse liebe suse was raschelt im Stroh?* was stumbling and imperfect.

Dumas did not spare her. "No, no, *no*, Gabrielle! Such bad German. You must concentrate on that. Can you think of anyone more important to opera than Wagner?"

Gabrielle sighed. "Can I possibly be an *Isolde* or *Sieglinde*?"

"Not to-day. That's why to-day is the time to plug at your German."

She sang Gretel's folk-song again; then, the difficult *Dove Song*. Fortunately, her breath control, instinctive and trained, carried her successfully through the aria. Dumas made no comment, although keenly conscious that it lacked force and that Gabrielle's youth and inexperience were holding her back from the deep emotionalism needed to interpret the role. Her imaginative dramatization must serve for the present.

But when her voice climbed the wonderful notes of *Rejoice Greatly* from the *Messiah*, some latent spiritual sense awoke into pulsing clarity, reaching a resonant power that cooled the nerve-centres of Dumas' body, leaving his mind liquid and flowing.

The reactions of Rufus to Gabrielle's singing were less complex. They had none of the tutored responses of the critic. When he heard her sing for the first time he was utterly astonished, since Julia, in her own self-absorption, had not dwelt on Gabrielle's gift. David let him into the house one Sunday afternoon just before Dumas' return, let him in to exquisite, soaring song, pouring like liquid gold in the phrases of *Hark, the Gentle Lark*. Rufus tiptoed to the living-room doorway. Gabrielle was accompanying herself, and she did not see

him at the door. He stood transfixed, her voice warming his body in a thrilling sweep. When the song had ended, he still stood there.

Gabrielle's fingers flew into an intricate aria from *Die Zauberflöte*. Then, aware of someone near her, she paused and turned towards him. "Rufus! When did you come?"

He crossed the room and sat down near her. "While you were singing." He added, "Gabrielle—Gabrielle—I didn't know you sang like that."

"Like that?" she echoed lightly.

"Well—there aren't enough words to tell you how you sing."

Gabrielle was filled with deep content. Rufus, like Kit, was now a sustaining force in her life. His praise rounded out her purpose, gave her courage and warmth of heart.

Rufus' eyes marvelled over her. "Imagine—Gabrielle a prima donna. I hadn't expected it."

"Is that so strange?" she asked, her pleasure and amusement mingling.

"It's always strange—when wonder touches your own life."

Her smile thanked him. "I have a long road to travel," she told him gravely. "And the going is awfully slow."

She took him to the library to meet her father. James was having a brandy and soda, and Rufus joined him cheerfully.

"Gabrielle's been telling me about you, Rufus." James watched the afternoon sun blend with the amber in his glass. "You and your candy business. I take my hat off to you. You've got guts, and there aren't enough to go around these days."

"Thank you, Mr. Livingston. It all developed from sheer necessity—a very good prod."

Gabrielle rummaged through one of the drawers of the old desk. "I'm looking for something for you, Rufus," she volunteered.

"Well, thanks awfully, but what?"

"An old candy recipe."

Rufus' eyes glinted. "If you can find us a new bar, Gabrielle, we'll name it after you."

"That's one way to get your name into print, Gabrielle," her father chuckled.

"Gabrielle's name is going to be in print one of these days all right," Rufus interposed. "I've just heard her sing."

"Good, isn't she?" said James proudly. "The family swan."

"And looks it, too," Rufus added.

James glanced from Rufus to Gabrielle. He liked the look of them

together. But Gabrielle was unconscious of both of them as she pulled out a book in a mottled brown and yellow cover. Rufus leaned over her shoulder and read the name written on the fly-leaf in fine, stilted writing:

"ANN SEVERS LIVINGSTON
July 1852."

"Holy smoke!" said Rufus.

Gabrielle ran through the pages, all covered with the same slanting script. "Cakes—pies—cookies—ah, here it is, candies." Her finger settled firmly on a promising recipe: "Molasses candy, with English walnuts."

"Sounds good," James commented, as Rufus read it out loud. "Why don't you try it?"

Gabrielle eyed Rufus' eager face. "Come on," she said. "I wanted to show you our kitchen anyway, Rufus."

By the time it was finished, Sue, David and Larry had crowded around the table with comments, suggestions and helpful hands.

"Don't mind them," Gabrielle laughed. "This is the way we live. In constant congregation. Sue and David are here to eat, Larry to help."

"I like that," said Sue, who, in spite of her skinny childhood, had bloomed into a full-blown seventeen, dark roses nodding in her cheeks. She was self-conscious about her curves, but her zest for food and her flaccid will-power held small promise of a slender future. Jimmy dubbed her "Poundy," but Sue's good humour, mounting with her weight, took his teasing without a sign of irritation.

She and David were already gorging shamelessly on the freshly made candy. The "molasses candy, with English walnuts" proved to have a subtle, inviting flavour.

"Like none I've ever tasted," Rufus said, passing the plate of dark squares to James.

"Hmm!" James said. He reached for another. "I might as well, before these hyenas polish them all off. I think you've got something here, Rufus."

"But we won't for long," Gabrielle observed, snatching the plate from under David's outstretched hand.

Rufus offered Gabrielle half-interest in the proposed bar. She smiled and shook her head. "The recipe belongs to Ann Severs, and she's been dead more than thirty-five years."

"But it's your property."

"Not mine especially. I only found it. It's yours if you want it." Rufus' eyebrows quirked despairingly at James.

James shrugged. "Gabrielle takes no payments for her gifts."

Rufus flushed. "I beg your pardon, both of you. I'm not used to your kind of people."

They all went back to the library with the rapidly diminishing batch of candy. Jimmy was lounging there and watched their arrival with interest.

"A taffy-pulling contest?" he inquired. "With me left out?"

"Ann Severs' contribution to the youth of to-day," James remarked.

"I always knew the family Mona Lisa had something," Jimmy bent over and took a second piece. "But I never thought it was anything sweet."

"I must see the lady," said Rufus. "Where do you keep her?"

James nodded towards her portrait.

"Ah!" Rufus stood beneath it, taking a long look. "I like the reigning generation better," he said at last, his eyes on Gabrielle, and then, in humorous inclusion, on the other members of the family unconsciously grouped around James Livingston IV.

20

GABRIELLE invited Kit to Sunday dinner along with Paul Dumas and Rufus. The brown stone house was looking its best. A blazing sun beat down on its weathered roof, but inside the old rooms were cool, faintly perfumed with flowers from the garden. The dining-room table held a low bowl of yellow roses that Rufus had sent to Gabrielle.

The women had donned light, softly coloured dresses; the men wore linens or white flannels. They lingered about the living-room, waiting for Anna Smoll to announce dinner.

"Well, look who makes her entrance," exclaimed Jimmy, as Sue whisked in, gay in a flowered print that did little to help her figure. "Poundy herself."

"She may be fat, but she's certainly not crabby," Larry defended her, and shot a meaning glance at Julia, slim and regal in ashes-of-roses organdie.

Larry, growing from pleasing childhood into handsome boyhood, was in his second year of high school, while David, a gangling, awkward eight, was wrapped in the mysteries of the fourth grade, his imaginative mind already curling back the pages of to-morrow. David dreamed away his days over engines and every kind of scientific book.

Larry was rapidly developing into the family athlete. He was strongly built, with firm muscles and a lean grace. He welcomed each change of season enthusiastically—switching with impartial gusto from tennis to baseball, from baseball to football, from football to skating. He lectured his father at length about his failure to take systematic exercise; and he had imbued the physical fitness phobia to the point where he tried to impose a daily dozen on every member of the family. Only Mary remained unmoved, and wholly indifferent about the state of her figure. She liked good food and let it go at that.

While Larry hammered his theories at the rest of the family, he was lenient with Sue, whom he loved with a deep affection that went back to their earliest days. There were three years between them and a host of jolly memories. Rene, thin, possessed of a certain grace of body and an elfin charm, was now brushing airily through the eighth grade. She shared Larry's interest in sport.

Julia disregarded Larry with the same coolness with which she accepted Rufus. Instinctively she knew it was maladroit to show her resentment at being discarded in favour of Gabrielle. Try as she would, she had never succeeded in attaining the casual touch with him. In an obscure way, she showed the same attitude to Kit. It was not that she had actually loved Kit—for years, she had kept a mixture of hero-worship and desperate puppy-love locked away in her own heart—but it was insupportable to her to watch his steady and warming devotion for her younger sister. Julia felt that life was giving her only the second best, no matter which way she turned.

To Rufus, Julia simply did not matter. This she found more terrible than a good healthy hate would have been. Gabrielle was there, and she filled his thoughts. To watch her, to be near her, to talk to her was heady wine that he sipped leisurely. This was a new technique for Rufus, whose wide selection of the feminine had accustomed him to the quicker winds of passion. Some day, he was sure, she would awaken to his touch. Until then he was content to wait, knowing that when he had Gabrielle, he would ask nothing of another woman. His work and growing success had given Rufus a new slant both on his emotions and on his energies.

This afternoon Gabrielle wore a white linen dress, a pert yellow handkerchief tucked into its breast-high pocket. She had no other ornament; she needed none. Rufus smiled down at her from his broad height. "You're a picture to-day, young lady," he told her. "Did I ever tell you how lovely you are?"

She laughed. "You can tell me as often as you like. The words are music in my ears."

"Women! Women!" exclaimed Jimmy. "You can dish a girl up blarney twenty-four hours a day, and she'll still take another helping."

"Eavesdropper," accused Rufus. "I'll bet you peek through key-holes."

"You'll sooh learn that this family has no secrets," Julia rasped.

"*Et tu, Brutel*!" groaned Rufus.

"Huh!" Jimmy grunted. "Showing off your French."

"It's Latin, Jimmy," corrected David, lifting his nose from a book on aeroplanes.

"Who asked you?" wondered Jimmy. "Anyhow, what do you know outside of what makes the wheels go round?"

"David knows plenty," said James kindly, looking at the wide, thoughtful brow of his gentlest son. "He could teach you tricks, Jimmy." James smiled disarmingly at his guests. "Don't mind us. We have no inhibitions."

In the hall Larry practised golf strokes until Julia called to him sharply to stop and join the others in the living-room.

All the jangled elements settled into place over the dinner-table.

Gabrielle had planned the menu, and Anna Smoll, grateful for room, board and minimum wages in a depression year, cooked the dishes with the only grace she had, and served them with stolid efficiency. Jimmy did his impish best to distract her attention, to bring a ripple of amusement to her heavisome face as she tramped in and out with plates under his mother's critical eye. Mary had served her family for so many years that instinctively she passed each plate with Anna. She could never wholly relax in the presence of a servant.

They toasted one another in the cool tang of Sauterne that Kit had brought with him.

James said, "I couldn't ask for finer company."

David, Rene, and Larry flourished their glasses of milk with the rest of them.

Late afternoon found them all lounging in the arbour. Julia played

checkers with Kit, while Rufus and Gabrielle stood James and Dumas to several games of cribbage. Dumas and Rufus had taken to each other on the spot. Their appreciation of Gabrielle drew them together instinctively. Rufus had sufficient knowledge of music to talk responsibly on the subject that always crept into any conversation of which Dumas was a part and put him somewhat outside the realm of Mary, Julia, and Jimmy.

Kit's good-natured friendliness to Rufus was more reluctant. He knew that Rufus was consuming more and more of Gabrielle's time, was leading her directly into the pastures that Kit himself had been eyeing longingly for years. He had no envy of Dumas. Kit took an intimate pride in Gabrielle's professional progress, but Rufus, he feared, would keep her earth-bound. He was sure that this was not what she needed. He would never have ventured himself to steer her into the narrow channel of domesticity. There were times when Kit, the man, knew that Kit, the idealist, was a fool; when his human impulses ran stronger than his aloof guardianship of Gabrielle, the gifted child. As she grew older, as more men impinged on her life, he began to wonder if he was standing aside merely to let someone more indifferent to her talent step in and check her career.

To-day, Kit, studying Rufus' dominant masculinity, his good looks, his youth and arrogant bearing, was humanly jealous, with the slow, burning pain of the older man for the younger. "I've got to be realistic about this thing," he told himself, watching Rufus hover over Gabrielle, spreading a faint bewitchment that obviously did not carry her away but that made her less aware of him—Kit—who had always been in the forefront of her life.

Dumas watched him with comprehension and sympathy. The old understanding between them gave him clear knowledge of Kit's distress. He was interested in Rufus, too, for he longed to see Gabrielle aroused from the prolonged passivity of her emotional life. Kit, he knew, could never do it. The protective element in their relationship was too strong. But as he watched Gabrielle with Rufus, he guessed that this was not the answer, either.

James considered the group around him with leisurely approval. The garden had the peaceful stillness of late afternoon. The flowers were folding for the night, their perfumes rich with the day's satiety. To James, the old house seemed to settle into the garden as if it, too, relaxed, looking backward as he did over its rich history. The lives that had been lived in it had left their own reminiscent glow. Each piece of furniture, its silver, its paintings, its glass were evocative

of four generations of Livingstons. Even Mary, James thought irrelevantly, looked faintly attractive in the mellow tinge of the garden.

They had a sketchy supper of sandwiches, iced tea and strawberry tarts. Dumas cornered Rufus about his candy bars. "We've talked music all afternoon," he said. "It's your turn now. I've seen your advertising from downtown to the suburbs. Whose cookery book made a pioneer out of you?"

Without ornamentation Rufus told the story of his business start. Terse as it was, he held the interest of everyone within range. Julia heard the whole of it with secret admiration for Rufus' enterprise. If only she could think of something to start on her own! But, lacking capital, what could she do?

Dumas asked Rufus about his father. "Is he still in town?"

Rufus shook his head. "He's in California. This is no place for him. Mentally and physically he needed a change."

"And how is your mother?" asked Mary tactlessly, forgetting that no one mentioned Almira Drake, since her separation from her husband and her return to her own family had become common gossip early in 1930.

"I don't know," said Rufus briefly.

Mary looked astonished. "You don't know?" she echoed.

Julia looked daggers at her and Mary subsided, conscious that there was something in the air she didn't quite understand.

Rufus' scorn for his mother edged only a notch above pity. He never visited her. Once in a while he sent her a note; at Christmas he gave her flowers. But he refused her money without a qualm. "You can get it from your family, mother," he told her coldly. "You belong to them now."

It was Rufus' candy business that had made his father's trip to California possible. Mr. Drake's heartbreak over his wife's desertion exceeded his grief over his business failure. There were plenty of women in Riverside, however, who saw the passing of Almira Drake with secret satisfaction. She had been a snob of the worst sort, ruthless in her social machinations and her dealings with anyone who had to work for her. Mary was so removed from the social picture now that she was scarcely aware of the toppling of this overbearing queen. It was of more interest to her that a large and successful business like Rufus Drake's had gone to the wall. She looked at the family grouped around her with quiet satisfaction. At least the Livingstons were still intact. Then, with the old familiar pang, she saw that James was pouring himself another drink. As long as that went on,

Mary had the uncomfortable feeling that the Livingstons would never do the best they could by themselves. She sighed and in an unusual flash of wisdom—wished she had the grace to accept her husband as he was.

Her dull perceptions were further aroused to interest by the obvious admiration being bestowed on Gabrielle by three men of such substance as Kit, Dumas, and Rufus. "Julia's burning up," she thought, with the inevitable swing of sympathy that Gabrielle always drew to herself.

"How do you think Gabrielle is doing with her music, Mr. Dumas?" Mary inquired.

"Very well, indeed, Mrs. Livingston." He looked intently at her tired face, her faded gold hair. "She does too many things, of course," he added pointedly.

"We all do too many things around here," Mary retorted. "I've been tired for the last fifteen years or so."

James looked at her bleakly. "My wife has brought up a large family," he explained.

"Of wits and cranks," said Jimmy pertly. He winked at Julia, who was sulking beside David, watching Gabrielle with a still, blonde fury that prompted Kit to sudden pity.

"How is the work going at college, Julia?" he asked, trying to draw her in from her isolation.

"One would scarcely call it a career," Julia snapped.

Rene did three cart-wheels on the lawn before them. "Well, I'm going to dance," she volunteered. "Like Mrs. Vernon Castle."

"Why not Ginger Rogers?" Jimmy corrected her. "Why be so dated?"

"Heavens! Two daughters in the limelight!" exclaimed James.

"I don't see any spotlights on Gabrielle," Jimmy put in.

"I think you've all got the wrong idea about Gabrielle," Dumas said. "She isn't just aiming into the blue. She isn't even totally ambitious. Not that I want her to be to the exclusion of everything else. But she could use more drive. And you could all help her by a good push or two." He smiled across at her as she listened, surprised, "Sometimes I wonder if she will use her talent to the full."

"Well, she might get married," Mary said. "And she could do worse than that."

"What! Our Gabrielle get married!" Julia's tone was sarcastic. "Where would that leave her voice?"

"Crooning," said Jimmy, "to drooling babies."

Dumas smiled at these nimble-witted youngsters, but he could have wished—for Gabrielle's sake—that they had more respect for her voice.

"Well, Gabrielle's got the gift, and she's a worker, too," Kit declared stoutly.

But she will never do what I would do to put myself across, given her opportunities, thought Julia, impatient with Gabrielle's mild response to the three men who hung on her words.

"You could all do things to help her," Dumas told them gently. "You should be more tolerant of her studying, her practising. In a way, your influence is good for her. But I don't think you actually realize the mission of a voice like Gabrielle's. It isn't funny to have a voice like hers. It's slightly divine. How many first-class singers are there in the world to-day? And when did we need the healing power of music more than now? The singing voices of the world are almost stilled, for the fine wine of leisure and good living are dying out in an era of economic pressure. Perhaps another generation will see a great revival of the arts. If we keep ourselves at peace. If we gather up our shattered forces and the unemployed are absorbed."

"Great art may be born out of suffering," said Rufus, "but history proves the contrary."

"The radio hasn't been a good influence for music," James commented.

"In one way it has, in another, decidedly not," Dumas observed. "It has brought more good music into more homes than one could have dreamed possible twenty years ago. It has given a great many fine voices the chance to be heard that they would never have found in any other way. But it's a short cut to success. It has minimized the value of the long patient years of study that the truly gifted vocalist should have. Soon young singers will not study as Gabrielle is doing now."

"They'll skip the hurdles and hug the mike," Jimmy quipped.

Dumas laughed. "Well, something like that."

"Why not?" demanded Julia. "Isn't it better to thrill two million than two thousand people?"

"You all make me feel as if I might as well give up," said Gabrielle. Her glance swung to Rufus, who heard her with astonishment.

"You wouldn't, Gabrielle. Not with a voice like yours?" he protested.

"Not a chance," said Dumas positively, holding Gabrielle firmly with his keen grey eyes.

"We might as well go in," said Mary, shivering. "It's getting a little chilly."

Gabrielle walked indoors between Kit and Rufus. Julia trailed behind with David, her rose organdie limp with evening dew.

21

KIT called on Dumas late Monday evening. Dumas was not surprised to see him. His coming had been foreshadowed in his disturbed blue eyes on the previous evening, in his reluctant speech and preoccupied manner.

Kit refrained from putting idle conversation between them and his mission. He said at once, "I've come about Gabrielle."

Dumas offered him a cigarette. "I thought as much."

Kit looked embarrassed. "Tell me about her voice," he hurried on. "Is she going to fulfil her promise?"

For a few minutes Dumas did not reply. His cigarette-smoke careened and settled. "She's still only a promise," he admitted finally.

"Do you mean—she hasn't improved as you hoped?"

"Not that. But she's so infernally young—emotionally. In other ways she grows daily. You've heard her sing. She has worked hard. Her technique's all right. Her voice is of the best. But it shows her emotional inexperience. It is affectionate, warm, joyous. But without depth. Without passion. She's still a child. Her sex is dormant. When she meets up with tenderness, passion, and all the rest of it, then we may look for fulfilment."

"Not with unhappiness, I hope?"

"Ah, Christopher. Always the doctor. You know damned well what a good jolt in that vein can do for artistic expression. If it doesn't get one down. But no, I don't wish sorrow for her. Only a rich and exhilarating experience that will give her some sense of the tragic roles she must sing."

Kit ground his cigarette into an ash-tray and promptly lighted another. Dumas watched his flexible hands with admiration. They would curl with percipience around violin strings, he thought, as well as his surgical instruments. "You don't think she's in love with Rufus Drake?" he asked at last.

"Isn't that obvious?"

Kit groaned. "As obvious as I am, I suppose."

Dumas regarded him thoughtfully. "How long have you been in love with Gabrielle?"

Kit blew out smoke. "For years. Always, in fact. But not in this particular way." He lunged to his feet and reached the hearth at a stride. The gracious room passed and repassed under his nervous tread. He stopped before the crayon portrait of Marianne Dumas that dominated the mantelpiece.

"May I venture a suggestion?" Dumas asked.

"You may."

"Are you sure you're not seeing your first love again in Gabrielle?"

Kit said harshly, "Elle and Gabrielle are as apart as the poles."

"But of the same strain. Are you going to tell Gabrielle?"

"Hell!" exclaimed Kit violently. "How can I? I'm not for Gabrielle. She wouldn't love me in a million years. Think of the breach in our ages, for one thing."

"She loves you now."

"Oh, that! Of course—like a father or a brother." He sat down again, but there was no repose in his body. "No," he said. "I'm not what Gabrielle needs. I know as a doctor, and you know as an artist, that it wouldn't do, would it, Paul?"

Dumas shook his head. "No, Christopher, it wouldn't do. You're right there."

Kit's dejection was complete. "It was all right until she got to be seventeen or so. Now it's a chronic pain with me. I don't know how long I can take it—seeing her grow lovelier all the time; watching youngsters like this Drake fall in love with her; and some day seeing her fall in love with one of them."

"It's tough luck, old man," Dumas sympathized. "You've been damned unselfish about it all. But you've hung around that family too much. You should stay clear of her for a while. That might help. Instead of punishing yourself continually."

"I know she's got to be happy," said Kit. "She's not the sort to flourish on frustrated love. I have a notion that Gabrielle will find her happiness in the old human way—with a husband and babies, rather than with her voice."

"I hate to hear you say that, Christopher. I hope it isn't true. But you know her better than I. You know that curious family strain that makes them all follow their bents. Of course, what I would like is to see Gabrielle have both a career and marriage. If she can take

both. The elder girl interests me. If she had Gabrielle's voice, she would get into opera no matter what. Not that I think she is anywhere near Gabrielle's equal. But I do admire her drive."

"Give me a woman with a heart any day," said Kit. "Julia's a bitch."

"Perhaps," Dumas compromised. "But with the sort of spirit that pushes one on. I like it. In the case of a career. Too much talent has been lost to the world because of soft hearts and soft heads. You've got to have a strain of iron to master opera."

Kit looked up with interest. "What chance has Gabrielle at opera, actually?" he asked.

"Every chance. Why?"

"Well, opera seems such a dim prospect for anyone now. Either here or abroad. Who cares?"

"True enough. Blame radio for that. And the films. But it's not dead, Christopher. And Gabrielle has what it needs."

Kit took Dumas' advice and saw little of the Livingstons for the rest of the summer, but the only effect was to make him more restless and unhappy. His profession could not fill his time altogether. His other friends were remote in his thoughts compared with his adopted family.

By early fall he had succumbed completely to the old urgency and dropped in at the Livingston house more often, relaxing in the warmth of its busy, teeming life. Gabrielle seemed more desirable to him than ever. Her mental growth was apparent. Her physical attraction for him became acute.

Sue had finished high school, but at Mary's insistence, she helped with the housework instead of looking for work.

"The mending alone," she told Kit, her abundant good humour sparkling in her smile, "is worth a darn good salary." Her smile dipped into a laugh. "But between you and me, Christopher Roberts, I wouldn't change places with Julia or Gabrielle for anything. I'd hate office work."

"A born wife," Kit laughed. "Well, Sue, contentment is worth a basketful of socks."

On election day James and Julia splashed through rain-drenched streets to vote the Republican ticket. Mary accompanied them, but she cast her vote for Franklin Roosevelt. "I'm tired of this everlasting depression," she said.

Julia side-stepped a puddle. "Now, ma, don't tell us that Hoover caused the depression."

"Well——" began Mary and screeched as a passing automobile sprayed mud against her legs. "I told you we should have taken the car," she berated James.

He looked at her and remembered a day during their courtship when he and Mary had tramped several miles in the rain. The sky had been slate-grey and low-hanging, too, and the rain had slapped their faces in the same way. She must have hated it then, too, he surmised, the haze of memory lifting briefly in a hopeless attempt to relate the Mary of to-day with the young, golden-haired Mary who had seemed so desirable to him then.

Mary took the Democratic landslide as a personal triumph. "I was sure I picked the winning side," she persisted, as each return over the radio gave Roosevelt a rising majority of votes.

"You really should follow the races, ma," Jimmy suggested. "You'd help the family a lot. You might put us on easy street. Without a bit of help from father."

Mary frowned. "Sour grapes."

"Well, what's Roosevelt going to do with Hoover's baby now that he's got it?" demanded Julia, always bitter in defeat.

"Change its pants, probably," Jimmy grinned.

James tossed the *Beacon* to the floor. "It looks as if the nation crossed up Maine," he commented, surveying his assembled family. Christmas cheered December, but the first of January ushered in a shadowed new year.

"Nineteen thirty-three," Gabrielle murmured close to Rufus' ear as they watched the guests at Albin Smith's annual party. "Here's to you, Rufus. Happiness and prosperity for all the New Year!"

His eyes held hers for a moment. Gabrielle's were dark with feeling, but the expression behind them was remote. She wore a chartreuse taffeta gown that swung out from her hips to the toes of her silver slippers. Her cheeks were pale against the dark line of her hair, curling softly around her head.

Rufus leaned towards her, his glass high, his eyes devouring her. "Gabrielle—Gabrielle! Let's drink to you. May you—for ever—be as lovely as you are to-night."

In the Queen Anne Lounge at the Brewster Hotel, a new young man pushed Julia over the crowded dance-floor. She looked her best, her hair a shining cap for her head. A plain black dress, touched up with the red roses her escort had sent her, gave her distinction in the crowd of hooting, gambolling revellers. Julia had never forgotten

the lesson Elle had taught her. She dressed now with taste and restraint.

But Julia was not happy. She was bored. Another year gone and where was she? She wished she had accepted Bob Spencer's invitation instead of Ronald De Laney's. Earlier in the evening she had decided that Ronald was not only unimportant; he was also dull. Nice-looking and well-groomed, of course, but he took too many trips outside. His furtive drinking made her sick, principally because he could not hold his liquor. He had nothing to talk about but himself, and that soon palled with another egotist like Julia. He danced like a lumbering truck and her slippers were wholly ruined.

When she sank into bed that night, Julia marked down New Year's Eve, 1932, as a total loss in her calendar.

For James the year that followed was one of such financial stress that even he was forced to take notice. Fees lagged; cases were infrequent. His routine tax business alone kept his head above water. He borrowed money from Kit to pay the taxes on his house. This was his first big surrender to Mary's nagging. It irked his spirit and made him unwontedly ill-natured.

"I hate to do this, Kit. Lord, how I hate it. We're already in your debt in every possible way. But if you can spare the money, it's easier to take it from you than from anyone. I could take the remainder of Raleigh's money to tide me over, but that belongs to Jimmy. He still has another year at college, you know."

"You needn't apologize, James. You know damn well I'm glad to loan it to you."

"I'll give you the house as collateral——"

"Like hell you will!" Kit roared. "Your word is good enough for me. I'll get the money from the bank to-morrow."

"Thanks, Kit. I'll have the note ready for you. I don't know where we Livingstons would be without you. Curing our ills. Gixing us your companionship. Starting Gabrielle with Dumas. Now this. Really, we owe you a lot."

James opened the liquor-cabinet and poured Kit a whisky and soda; then a double for himself. A staunch friend, Kit. Never by so much as a glance had he shown that he thought James might cut down on this expensive indulgence of his.

"I suppose every man goes through life with some particular noose around his neck," said James. "But money's always been mine. I can't make it or keep it, as father did, or great-grandfather either. They had the knack. It's been left out of me." He tossed his liquor

down. "Even the board money from the girls goes down the drain with a twist of the faucet." He frowned suddenly. "Did you know that Gabrielle stopped one lesson with Dumas to give me more money? Not at my instigation. She wouldn't tell me why, but, of course, it was Mary. I went around belching fire and brimstone for a while, but you know how Mary is about money. As for Gabrielle—well, she has a stubborn streak a mile wide, in spite of that soft manner of hers. I couldn't budge her."

"You should be glad she's independent."

"I am. But even independence can be carried too far."

Kit said nothing. He never ceased to marvel at the strange union of James and Mary. He had every sympathy for James, but deep inside him was an ingrained regional knowledge of Mary's thrifty qualms and fears. A hopeless deadlock, stretching over the years, the result of temperamental differences too strong to overcome.

22

January 1, 1934

FOR Julia the year just ended was a prison against whose bars she had beaten her hands in vain.

For Gabrielle the months had been busy and productive. She had done hard, steady work, wearying at times, but rich with æsthetic satisfaction as she mastered one role after another, as her knowledge of languages progressed, as her understanding deepened and her sense of values became more acute. There had been interludes of recreation, too, but primarily it had been a year of study and growth.

She was sitting now on the bed putting her New Year's Eve souvenirs into a box. She glanced reminiscently into the compartment labelled 1933. Reservation cards and a menu from the Lowry Hotel in St. Paul; a paper napkin from the Town Talk Café; a place card from a dinner at the Brewster Hotel. Withered flowers, their perfume heavy and sickening now with decay. Silly hats. A loud bandana that Rufus had tied around her neck on a horseback ride. Horns. A napkin from a skating-party.

Julia lounged on the opposite side of the bed. She wore a house-

coat of changing lavender taffeta. Her hair was smooth clear gold. She watched Gabrielle with measuring eyes.

"Is all that junk souvenirs from places you've been with Rufus?"

Gabrielle nodded, her smile faintly wistful over so many memories. "I don't have time to see him much, so when we do have a chance, we celebrate."

Julia's glance slanted over the dark head. "Where's your voice getting you, anyway, Gabrielle? As far as I can see, it's not worth all the time and money it's costing you."

Gabrielle's smile faded quickly. "Oh, yes, it's worth it," she responded soberly. "You couldn't imagine the satisfaction I get from it, Julia. Deep inside me. Don't you ever enjoy your work, just for its own sake?"

"Not mine," said Julia acidly.

"Well, I suppose what a person does makes a difference. I can't say that my work in Dr. Chambers' office has been more than a means to an end. But my studies are different, Julia. I couldn't begin to tell you what I have gained from them. And this is only the beginning. Dumas says I can probably go on the concert stage in another year if I want to. But he would prefer me to study abroad for a year first——"

"Abroad!"

"Yes. That's essential for opera. For the languages, if for nothing else."

Julia did not look at Gabrielle. She had a sick feeling in the pit of her stomach.

"If that's how it is, then why doesn't Dumas stick around and teach you instead of traipsing all over the country on concert tours?"

Gabrielle's head came up with a jerk. "Nobody in this family—except father—seems to understand that my lessons don't support Mr. Dumas."

"He has other pupils, hasn't he?"

"Yes," snapped Gabrielle, "and they're glad to study under him. Whether for one month or ten. It's a privilege to have such a teacher. Anyway, he's not touring this year at all."

"How nice of him!"

Gabrielle slammed the lid on her box of souvenirs, her usual good nature strained to the limit. "I'd like to know what difference it makes to you whether I do anything with my voice or not. It's no skin off you."

"Waste is waste," said Julia sententiously. She picked up the book she had discarded.

But Gabrielle would not let it go at that. Julia had started the argument. She might as well follow it through. "Have you done anything so spectacular that you can criticize me?" she demanded.

Flames in Julia's cheeks fought flames in her eyes for supremacy. "At least I save my money."

"For what?" Gabrielle's glance rested on the title of the book in Julia's hands. "*Manners for Millions*. Goodness! You could teach etiquette, I suppose. You read enough about it."

Julia's mouth opened and closed suddenly. With slowly widening eyes, she stared at her sister. "Why not?" she whispered to herself. "Why not?"

Holding the large box in her arms, Gabrielle slid off the side of the bed. She hesitated. "Julia, I'm sorry I was so nasty——"

But Julia had already forgotten Gabrielle. She was gazing in pre-occupation at the fire curling around the wood in the grate.

Gabrielle shrugged and walked over to the wall-cupboard to store her box. After she had gone downstairs, Julia still sat on the bed. Thinking. Thinking. In a burst of excitement she tossed the book aside and sprang to her feet. She paced back and forth in front of the fire.

"Possibilities without end," she assured herself. "Personality. Etiquette. Clothes. Colours. Coiffures. Why not? Julia Livingston—expert on etiquette."

She hunted for a cigarette and found one in the little glass dish on the night-stand. She smoked as she walked, her mind opening to strange vistas of accomplishment and power. There was space in America for more than one Emily Post. When she finished her cigarette, she hurried down to the library for pen and paper. In the front hall she met Jimmy and another young man. Both wore leather jackets and breeches. Both had skates tucked under their arms.

Jimmy introduced Oliver Johnson to Julia. Oliver's brown eyes glistened over Julia's polished beauty.

"We're waiting for Sue," Jimmy said. "She's going skating with us." He strode to the stairway and yelled, "Hey, Sue, shake a leg!"

Sue's voice floated down to them. "Coming!"

Julia continued on her way to the library. It was deserted, but

fearful of interruptions, she took the writing materials to her room. There, seated in the rose-coloured wing-chair, she outlined her plans. She wrote hastily, then lapsed into thought, then scribbled again. She crossed out certain items and rearranged her outline, not once but many times.

All afternoon she planned while the life of the house went on about her. Gabrielle poked her head around the door to ask if she wanted tea, but Julia waved her away curtly. She did go down to dinner, however, still wearing her house-coat, but it might have been a glittering evening gown, so electrically did it clothe her. The candle-light enhanced her animation, lent romance to the quickening colour in her cheeks, the sparkle in her eyes. Young Johnson fell in love with her and completely forgot Sue, who lamented to Rufus later, "That's what comes of having two good-looking sisters. I never get any men."

"Bigamist," accused Rufus, and laughed as her reluctant laughter bubbled. "Of course," he added, "you wouldn't want anyone so susceptible as Oliver."

"Maybe not," Sue granted. "But I do want someone."

Julia scarcely noticed Oliver. If she had, his admiration would have pleased her; but his infatuation would have entrenched her further in her instinctive sense of superiority.

As the days wore on, her inner enthusiasm increased, flickered, settled around a routine of study. For Julia had decided to devote herself to a year's research before she opened her school. Her collection of notes and memoranda bore the heading "School of Individuality." After testing out various names for it, she decided that individuality was the line for her to follow. It was different, and it covered a wider field than etiquette alone.

Julia's research was done with thoroughness and purpose. She skimmed the public library shelves for everything she could find on etiquette, personality, psychology, hobbies. She clipped from the papers articles dealing with styles, manners, habits, and make-up. She read the magazines on any related subject. She enrolled in a diction class at the Hanover School of Speech and an extension course in speech at West River College. Her note-books accumulated; her manner became more secretive.

Jimmy and the others were consumed with curiosity, but Gabrielle alone guessed what all this strange activity meant. She found Julia in their bedroom one evening engrossed in *The Psychology of Personality*. Similar books lay on the floor at her feet.

Julia ignored Gabrielle, but Gabrielle said, "So you're going to do it?"

"Do what?" Julia's voice was cold and unrevealing.

Gabrielle sat down on the settee. "Go into the personality business."

"Well?"

"I think it's a good thing for you to do, Julia. It's unusual and you just might put it across. Anyway, I wish you luck."

"Thanks," said Julia uncommunicatively and went back to her book. She could not bear now to remember that her idea had come from a chance suggestion made by Gabrielle. But with her sister in the room her attention wandered. At last she marked her place in the book with a pen and laid it on the small table beside her chair.

"What's this?" she inquired. "A Rufus or a voice night?"

Gabrielle stirred, a tired movement that barely lifted her eyelids. "What did you say?"

Julia repeated her question.

"Rufus wants to take me to the Steiger's, but I don't know if I can get up enough ambition to get ready. I'm so tired, Julia."

"Too much night life. You'd better cut down on one thing or the other—either your studies or your recreation. You're looking awfully peaked."

"Too much something," Gabrielle agreed, "but it's certainly not too much night life." Her fatigue was visible in every line as she rose. "This is the first date I've had with Rufus in a week."

"Who's that hard on? You or Rufus?"

Gabrielle flushed. "Rufus knows I can't do everything."

"Maybe so. But I should think he'd get tired of waiting for you to do something."

"He seems to understand. He has work to do, too."

Gabrielle began to undress slowly. She felt better after her bath. When she returned to the bedroom, she found Julia pulling a sheer wool-crêpe dress over her head. The soft blue cloth settled clingingly about her body, etching Julia's excellent figure.

"Going out?" Gabrielle observed.

Julia fastened a silver clip at her throat. "Jerald Hale called. He suggested the Hammond Café."

"Oh, ritzy. Who's Jerald Hale?"

"A professor at West River."

"Does he have whiskers?" teased Gabrielle.

"Did you ever see me out with anyone who did?" Julia retorted.

Gabrielle laughed. "Oh, Julia, I was only kidding."

"It wasn't funny."

Gabrielle was searching through her wardrobe for a suitable dress. "I never seem to have anything new."

"As I've said before——"

"I know, I know," Gabrielle interrupted. "I spend too much money on my voice."

She chose a rose silk crêpe, thinking that its pinkish tone might conceal her weariness. She wondered how she could drag herself through the evening. Julia went out with such swing and zest. Gabrielle envied her her physical vitality.

When Rufus arrived, she was resting in the living-room. He took her hands and smiled at her before he kissed her. "I'm so darn glad to see you, Gabrielle. And you look charming."

"I don't feel it, Rufus. I feel half dead. Would you mind very much if we didn't go dancing to-night?"

His eyes swept her face and body. This time they did not miss the tired head, the drooping shoulders. "Of course not. Sit down, Gabrielle. What have you been doing? Working too hard?"

"Perhaps." She sank gratefully into a chair. "But I don't like to disappoint you."

He laid a firm hand over one of her listless ones. "If I'm with you," he told her truthfully, "I'm not disappointed."

"How nice you are, Rufus!" She sighed. "I'm afraid I won't even be good company."

"Forget all that. Relax. I'll find some music on the radio and you can listen or not as you like. I can do with a bit of relaxation myself. Then in a half-hour, I'll take you for a drive and we'll stop at some quiet spot for a cup of tea. How does that sound?"

"Heavenly."

In less than five minutes, Gabrielle crumpled into exhausted sleep. Through the hushed radio music, Rufus watched her, yearned over her seeking. It was becoming increasingly difficult for him to keep their relationship on its present detached physical level. Yet some intuitive restraint held him in check, subduing his desire for a sign of awakening in Gabrielle. It was a new routine for Rufus, who had always taken what he wanted in the past. He was not blind to the danger of losing her by holding off too long. He knew that Gabrielle was not unconscious of sex. Through her studies, if not her personal knowledge, she was becoming increasingly aware of the total range of emotional experience, but it was amply clear to Rufus that passion

was still only a mental acknowledgment with her rather than a physical understanding.

In the midst of Rufus' uneasy vigil, James passed along the hall and paused in the doorway. Rufus motioned him to silence. James saw Gabrielle, nodded, and tiptoed away. But she awoke sharply, as if she had sensed his passing. She sat up in alarm.

"Rufus! How terrible of me! How long did I sleep?"

"Nearly an hour."

"You should have wakened me."

Rufus smiled at her, wondering if she could have any inkling of the struggle that he had been through. "Why?" he asked. "You were so tired. Do you feel better?"

"Much better. Shall we go for a ride now?"

Gabrielle rose, stretching, the lines of her body unfolding in a lovely curve. She smiled at Rufus, but her eyes held the absent look of one who has wandered in the distant pastures of sleep and has not quite found his way back to reality again.

23

PAUL DUMAS frowned over Gabrielle. She had just finished her first scale, and her weariness veiled her voice like mist. There were times when he wondered if he could pull her through the necessary amount of training, so deep was her lassitude. Yet he knew it was purely bodily; that her spirit never flagged.

"Not another note," he ordered her now. "You're going home and to bed."

Gabrielle protested. "I rested all week-end."

"But not half enough." He contemplated her thoughtfully.

"Have you seen Christopher at all?"

She sat down in an armchair. "Often. It's a blood condition he's always thought I'd outgrow. Evidently I haven't, because from time to time this dreadful feeling of fatigue returns."

"It's not good for your music, Gabrielle," said Dumas sharply. "The singer, more than any other artist, needs physical exuberance. Can't you simplify your life, instead of trying to do so many things?" He remembered a younger Gabrielle, utterly spent. "You'll lose your

grip, and that would be a pity, having got this far. You must do something about it. Let me see—you work from nine to five in Dr. Cameron's office. On Wednesdays and Fridays you have a lesson with me. Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, you practise your scales, exercises and solos——”

“Saturdays and Sundays, too.”

“Then on top of that come your languages, your musical histories, all the reading I have suggested. And I suppose an engagement with Rufus now and again. Or a Symphony concert with Christopher. My dear child, do you ever have time just to sit and think?”

Gabrielle sighed, “Not often.” Her cheeks were deathly pale. It bothered her when Dumas detected her exhaustion, for she felt this was something she would always have to fight. She knew already that it was having a debilitating effect on her work.

Dumas ran his hands through his hair, and spoke to Gabrielle more decisively than he ever had before. “You’ve got to cut your activities to a minimum. Your hour with me on Wednesdays and Fridays. A half-hour of scales and exercises each night, an hour of singing. For one month drop the languages and musical studies. Begin them again moderately. An hour a night divided between the two. Increase your time whenever you feel up to it. Does that sound reasonable?”

“Very. But you’ve no idea—in our house, there are countless interruptions.”

“Oh, in any house,” he conceded, but with a clear picture of the Livingston *ménage* in his mind he did not doubt that the aggravation in Gabrielle’s case was acute. “Don’t drop your recreation, Gabrielle. You should have as much of that as possible. You do enjoy Rufus, don’t you?”

Gabrielle’s eyes answered his question before she did. “Yes. Rufus has meant a lot to me. But I often think we aren’t quite fair to each other. We hold on to each other so tightly—and still—so lightly.” She hesitated, trying to pull scattered thoughts together. Choosing her words carefully, she went on, “Our friendship has an intangible quality. I don’t know how to define it,” she finished.

Feeling suddenly sorry for Rufus, Dumas asked, “Are you trying to tell me that you and Rufus aren’t in love with each other?”

He watched her face shadow, saw the pupils narrow the iris of her eyes, leaving blackness where only darkness had been before.

“Why, yes,” she said, “that’s what I’m trying to say.” She leaned forward, her hands tight in her lap. “You don’t believe me, I suppose, Mr. Dumas! You think I don’t know what I’m saying.”

Dumas replied, "I believe you, Gabrielle. I know you're not in love with Rufus."

"But you think Rufus is in love with me? Well, he isn't. If he were, he'd tell me so."

Having no wish or no right to speak for Rufus, Dumas assured her, "If Rufus loves you, he will tell you, Gabrielle."

She frowned a little. "Yes, I suppose he will. In his own good time."

"You underestimate Rufus. In *your* own good time, Gabrielle."

She stared at him. "Why, you're right, of course. Am I selfish to be glad you're right?"

"You know you are. But you're not alone."

"Which is no excuse. But I'm glad anyway."

She rose. "I'm going home now and will go straight to bed. I shall do as you suggest, too. And for the next month I'll be in bed every night by eight o'clock."

"Oh, make it nine," suggested Dumas, laughing.

After this talk with Dumas, life flowed more evenly for Gabrielle. She felt much more relaxed. She did not loaf, but she ran her music instead of letting it run her. Gradually her health improved; and, in full tide, her humour and gaiety. She started to save—a dollar here, a dollar there, for her year abroad. Her heart danced fantastically again as she pictured herself treading the same boards as Lilli Lehmann, Jenny Lind, Maria Malibran. Instinctively she knew that she was a dubious candidate for fame, but with her new vitality of outlook this did not dismay her. Before, ultimate success had been a dream, a misty grail. Now resolute purpose backed her talent. Together their pace was not feverish; it was steadily adventurous.

Her voice took on a new quality, which Rufus noticed and analysed correctly as purpose. He was conscious of more strength and fire in Gabrielle. When he mentioned it to her, she felt uncertain of its implications. "I don't want my voice to be hard," she said.

"Never that. I mean it's more vibrant. It has a richer quality."

Dumas concurred with Rufus' observation. "Don't think you can spoil your voice with growth, Gabrielle. You're one person who can never do that. You have a gracious mind."

Gabrielle felt within herself the warm rushing tide of power. It made her work easier. It drew her into closer sympathy with Rufus. Her well-being and good humour were noticed by the whole family—even Julia, who concluded that Gabrielle's glitter must come from

a slowly dawning love for Rufus. She had never been able to make out just what her sister's feelings for him were.

But Gabrielle was due for a surprise from Rufus that shook the foundations of her daily existence for a time. They had accompanied Jerald Hale and Julia to Win Smith's show at the Commodore theatre. They had stood in line for an hour in a packed lobby and waited for the end of one performance to dislodge applauding spectators from their seats.

"I'll bet some of them stay for two shows," Julia said, shifting her weight from one foot to the other.

Rufus chuckled. "Five to one we do, too!"

They did. Twice they watched a gilded car, wheels moving, a girl in the driver's seat, rise from the pit. They listened to buoyant music and laughed at the antics of the band. They heard the swoop of *The Man on the Flying Trapeze* as played by the Smith band in imitation of other band leaders. Their hands joined the rush of applause for the haunting *Smoke Gets in Your Eyes* and the popular *Love in Bloom*.

After the show, all four trooped to the Queen Anne Lounge in the Brewster Hotel for cocktails and dancing. Rufus and Gabrielle started over the tiled floor to the tune of *Moonlight Bay*.

"Having a good time?" Rufus asked, devotion deep in his eyes.

"Wonderful," replied Gabrielle. "I always do when I'm with you," Rufus. You know, I never did things like this until I met you."

His lips brushed her hair, but the caress was light and without her knowledge. His arms tightened about her fractionally. "That's something," he said.

The orchestra played *The Old Spinning Wheel*. Rufus said, "Gabrielle, I have something to tell you."

Her mind returned to him from the song, "Yes?"

He thought, "I love you, Gabrielle." But he announced quietly, "I'm going to Chicago next week. I'll be gone for a year."

They lost step to her startled hesitation. "Rufus!"

He hoped her heart meant all that that one word indicated. He hoped, too, that the music wouldn't stop just yet.

"Rufus, a whole year!" Gabrielle looked her dismay. "But—I'm going to miss you terribly."

"Well, you know we're opening a branch office in the Chicago loop, and I have to start things moving out there. It's only temporary, Gabrielle, but it has to be done. You know how we're growing."

"Yes, yes, Rufus, and I'm so glad for you. It's wonderful how your business grows."

The song ended, and they walked slowly toward their table. Gabrielle was still a little dazed. She had come to count on Rufus as she did on Dumas and Kit. "I can't believe it," she said at last.

While Julia and Jerald danced, Rufus ordered another Martini. Gabrielle sipped her drink half-heartedly. Rufus followed every movement she made. Desire for her gripped him intolerably. For some time past his passive role and Gabrielle's assumption of an interminable friendship had been unendurable. He now felt a persistent and overwhelming need of her love.

"Gabrielle!" He reached across the table to take her hand. Her fingers were cool, yet curiously thrilling in his clasp. "Gabrielle, your music means everything to you now, doesn't it?"

Her eyes met his honestly. She knew what was in his mind—that Rufus was tired of the light hold they had on one another; that he sought a deeper satisfaction. "Yes, Rufus, it does," she said, after a long pause.

For a torn moment, he hated her voice. In one year, two years, it might take her anywhere—certainly farther away from him. But almost at once he told himself that in the end time would not matter. He would always be there, wanting her.

The pressure of her fingers remained in his hand. He looked at his empty palm before he picked up his cocktail. Then he lifted the glass, and as he smiled at her over its rim, the pain retreated in his eyes. "You'll write to me, Gabrielle?" he asked.

She wiped tears from her lashes. A smile trembled across her mouth. "Of course I will, Rufus."

The Saturday he left for Chicago, he lunched with the Livingstons. The dining-room was cool and shadowed, immeasurably deep in its past. Touching the old plates, the thin silver spoons, Rufus thought, "I'm going away from home." For a moment he wished that he could recover his former blithe indifference to all things and all people. In his new gravity, so many things stirred him to the quick.

When he left for the station, everyone except Gabrielle said good-bye to him at the door. Affectionately they wished him good luck and God-speed. Only Julia's handshake lacked cordiality. David, always interested in his serious way in the goings-on of his elders, hung over him with reluctance to let him go. "We wanted to go to the train with you, Rufus," he said. "But father said just Gabrielle ought to go."

"Thank you, David." His glance met James' smile over the boy's curly head. "Your father is a very wise man."

Rufus and Gabrielle took a taxi to the Union depot, for Rufus had stored his car. They were silent most of the way. Gabrielle pressed her hands over her eyes.

"Headache?" asked Rufus quickly.

"No—oo," quavered Gabrielle. "I'm going to cry."

The cab pulled up in front of the station. The Union clock gave Rufus barely time to make the train. He tossed his bags to a Red Cap, and he and Gabrielle rushed through the waiting-room to the elevators. But one slid away from them, so they took the stairs. Breathless, they pulled up before the waiting train.

"Air-conditioned," said Gabrielle, staring through a veil of tears at the coach.

Rufus tipped the porter. Then he turned uncertainly to Gabrielle. She said, "Rufus, don't go!"

He swept her into his arms.

"All aboard! All—ll a—board!"

Rufus kissed her. As he had never kissed her before—a swift, hard kiss that demanded and hungered. Gabrielle's pulses leapt to its strangeness.

"I'll be back for Christmas," he said, releasing her.

"All—ll a—board!"

The porter caught his bags, and Rufus swung himself up the steps. Waving good-bye to him, Gabrielle remembered Dumas' departure.

"I wonder if I'll always be crying at railroad stations?" she thought.

She never forgot the loneliness Rufus' absence brought her. His letters came at least twice a week. They were interesting and gay, but they were not Rufus. He wrote of his business, which was constantly expanding. He mentioned movies, and, occasionally, a play. He never burdened her emotionally except to say, "I miss you a lot, Gabrielle. Saturdays and Sundays don't seem the same when I'm not banging your knocker."

He did not tell of restless nights, of long, lonely walks, of solitary meals; or later, of the inadequacy of other women's companionship. Rufus, who had always been able to attune himself to a new girl, now knew beyond doubt that he could not escape from Gabrielle's spell. In leaving her he had hoped to test its strength, perhaps to end it.

And Gabrielle, lying awake in the four-poster bed, with spring blowing in at the windows, thought, "I ought to love him, I miss him so much. What—I wonder—is the boundary-line between liking

and love, and how shall I know when I cross it? ” And over and over, “ Why do I know so surely that this is not love? ”

But her loneliness for Rufus brought a nostalgic note into Gabrielle's work. Dumas noticed it at once and rightly interpreted it as another symptom of growth.

24

IN June, Jimmy received his Bachelor of Laws degree from the University of Minnesota. The Livingstons, augmented by Kit and Jerald Hale, attended his commencement exercises *en masse*. They sat in the hot, semi-darkness of the stadium, murmured among themselves, brushed away mosquitoes and waited. David sat like a young dreamer, envisioning his own future, and Larry, whose interests were confined largely to the athletic side of academic life, murmured with Sue.

In their different ways, they all felt pride in Jimmy, who had wisecracked his way to a Bachelor of Laws degree, but with so much stalwart support of the family foundations that they all knew they owed him much. James felt that his eldest son might never impart much dignity to the family name, but he valued his sparkling qualities. He had a strong dash of the second James Livingston in him.

Mary beamed over Jimmy's graduation, remembering the loads of wood he had carried for every fireplace in the house, the dishes he had washed, the errands he had run, and all with actual good nature, in spite of his loud complaints. But when the Dean of the Law School finally presented his candidates to the President, her son was just another black-robed figure who marched upon the huge stage and off again, clutching a small folder. However, the Livingstons and their guests applauded furiously. Then, thankful that the end of the programme was in sight, they fought mosquitoes in earnest.

At the close of the exercises, the family met Jimmy at gate nine and rushed him to the Curtis Hotel in Minneapolis for a celebration which Kit had planned in Jimmy's honour. Jimmy and Gabrielle, sitting side by side at their table in the dining-room, struck a startling resemblance to each other.

“ Ike and Mike,” Kit dubbed them.

"Why?" demanded Julia. "They don't look alike——" and slurred into silence because, strangely, they did.

"Jimmy's blond and Gabrielle's dark," Mary pointed out matter-of-factly. "They aren't alike at all, except that they're both thin."

"It's the internal transcending the external," James decided. He turned to his wife. "Like to jig, Mary?"

A faint light brightened Mary's features. As quickly as it had come, the radiance died. "You dance with Gabrielle," she said. "I'm tired."

The old barrier between them rose in James' mind. There was no way of climbing it, for it was based on weariness and disillusion. It did not even have the sharp savour of hate. There was no sting behind it, just staleness.

Larry stayed with Mary. Everyone else danced but David, who stared, eyes glistening, at the crowded dance-floor, his mind busy with the fantasies of the future. He would be an architect, thought David. He would design tall buildings that scraped the clouds. He wouldn't sell in a grocery store. He wouldn't add up figures in an office. But, like Jimmy, he would graduate from the University of Minnesota. And when he did, he would know more than Jimmy, who had learned little from his books, in David's opinion.

Jerald Hale piloted Julia toward a clear spot near the orchestra. It was his first introduction to the Livingston clan in its entirety. Although less impressive without the background of their fine home, they struck him at once as being an original family group.

"Your family's remarkable," he told Julia. "Being an only child, I've always looked longingly at mobs of brothers and sisters."

"They are fun," Julia agreed reluctantly, "although they drive me daffy at times, particularly to-day's star." She stared at Jimmy. "But I couldn't imagine life without them."

"I like Sue," Jerald said. "She's such a jolly sort of person."

Julia's body stiffened. "Sue likes big families, too," she said, her voice edged.

Kit had the next dance with Gabrielle. He spoke only once and then it was to say, "You dance beautifully, Gabrielle." Otherwise, he was content to hold her graceful body in his arms.

Gabrielle enjoyed proximity to Kit. Of all the men she knew he gave her the greatest sense of security. She was conscious of the quiet demand behind Rufus' manner, of Dumas' exigency for her work. But Kit demanded nothing. He enveloped her in repose and

feeling of safety. She felt at peace with him—an old childhood friend who would never betray or desert her.

"God, I might be her grandfather," thought Kit with a sense of despair as he swung around with her, reading something of what was in her thoughts. "Why can't I keep away from her, instead of storing up more pain for myself?" Each day she grew more desirable to Kit, but each day she travelled farther away from him.

But no complexities stood between Jerald and Sue as they bumped gaily over the floor, completely at ease in each other's company.

"I've never been here before," said Sue, her mouth a happy twist of red.

Jerald almost said, "We'll come here often if you like it." He caught himself in time. Instead he observed, "You get a lot of fun out of life, don't you?" And held her a little closer.

Jimmy whirled Julia in a maze of circles. "Loosen up," he chided her, breaking from a whirl into a long glide. "Bend your back. It won't break." And swung her merrily again.

Julia's smile had frozen. "Jimmy Livingston——" she whispered furiously, but Jimmy hummed *I'll String Along With You* and whirled with abandon.

For Jimmy the day was one of release. College had been a grind for him. He was anxious to put aside his books and get down to a fruitful job.

"Jealous?" he teased Julia. "Because you didn't go through with it?"

"You're insufferable," she told him.

There were times when Julia felt that she had cut a notch out of her career by leaving college so soon, but it was impossible for her to openly admit an error of judgment. If she had done it, it must be right. Her sense of infallibility was fixed.

The following week Jimmy astonished the family by going to work for Rufus' candy company. At first he had been dubious about accepting the position, but in lengthy correspondence Rufus had convinced him finally that the firm needed a lawyer.

"It'll be a small salary to start," Rufus wrote, "but we're expanding and you'll make more money as we do."

Jimmy joined him in Chicago and was amazed at the progress the Drake Company had made in a few short years. "All this from a hunk of candy," he marvelled.

"We're putting out a new bar this fall," Rufus told him. "Albin had been tinkering with it for a long time. Before I left, Gabrielle

took a hand in it. She stirred up a batch and threw in some peanuts, butter. Boy, you never tasted a better flavour. Zip, zang——! The Presto Bar!" He frowned at Gabrielle's brother. "But she won't take a dime for it. And here we go—raking in dough on another bar of hers."

Jimmy's shoulders lifted. "Well, you know Gabrielle."

Jimmy took Rufus to Aunt Elle's apartment, but the butler informed them that Mrs. Atwood had left a week ago for California.

"Darned inconsiderate of her," declared Jimmy.

He returned from Chicago in high spirits. "This is the life," he informed his family. "No more groceries! Only candy bars. Hot dog!"

"College hasn't lowered your slang resistance," Julia told him acidly. "And what's so wonderful about being lawyer to a candy bar?"

"It's darned decent of Rufus to take me in," Jimmy reminded her soberly. "He could easily get someone more experienced than me."

Julia did not see Jerald until several weeks after commencement. Then on a hot, dust-filled day, he stopped at the office to take her to lunch. They ate at the Blue Lantern on the edge of the campus. The café was a favourite rendezvous for West River students and faculty. It consisted of three connecting dining-rooms, each one furnished in maple. Brass lanterns bracketed the walls and a brass lantern with a blue globe swung over the entrance door.

With school limited to a small summer session enrolment, the place was sparsely peopled, oddly subdued. Jerald found a table in the far dining-room. He was attentive and courteous, yet Julia, apprehensive since the night at the Curtis, sensed his preoccupation. There was little conversation until Jerald gave their order to the waitress. Then it was Julia who, seeking to end the discomfort between them, offered lamely, "I like it here."

"So do I," Jerald agreed. "Cigarette?" He lit one for her. Then without further warning he plunged, "Julia, I feel like a heel——"

Julia's throat contracted. It wasn't that she cared for him at all. She liked him; she enjoyed his company. But she hated defeat in any form. And she seemed to be meeting it in all directions. She swallowed, freeing her throat.

"You don't look like one," she said, smiling.

"Nevertheless," Jerald began, and broke off at the inanity of repetition. "The fact is—oh—you'll probably think I'm crazy—"

blundering here and there—but, Julia, I'm in love with your sister——”

She saw his dark, lean face through a glittering mist. “Sue?” she murmured.

“Sue,” he confirmed her suspicion.

Julia had suspected it for two weeks, but knowledge was more brutal than postulation. She thanked heaven for the interruption made by the waitress. Struggling for composure, she watched the large hands lay butter and rolls before her, and a moment later, a yellow plate heavy with fruit salad.

When they were alone again, Julia raised cool eyes and a neat smile to Jerald's troubled gaze. “No, Jerald,” she said, “I don't think you're crazy. You see—Sue is my sister.”

Julia kept up a front for the rest of the hour. But it was less simple at home. Sue was unintentionally tactless about her conquest of Jerald. When he telephoned for a date on Saturday afternoon, she rushed into her sisters' room, exclaiming, “Julia! Guess who called? Guess!”

Julia's pen straggled a word into her note-book. “I don't need to,” she returned coolly. “It was Jerald. He told me he was going to.”

“Did he really?” Sue gazed uncertainly about the room. “Where's Gabrielle? I must tell her.”

“Hiding in the closet,” rasped Julia suddenly, and bit her lip as Sue became visibly contrite.

“Oh, Julia, do you mind? I'm sorry—really——”

Julia recovered her poise. “You're not in the least sorry. And neither am I. Run along and tell Gabrielle. She's probably in the library.”

As Sue left, Julia fought bitter tears. “Yes, tell Gabrielle!” she muttered vehemently. “Tell everybody! Tell the whole world!” And sobbed over her note-book.

But she presented a calm front to the sly amusement of the family. Jimmy rode her unmercifully during dinner. Julia cringed inwardly, but she met each challenge as it came.

“Sue may be built to Jerald's wifely specifications,” she said, when Jimmy bluntly pointed out that she had lost another prospect. “But not me.”

“What d'you mean?” Rene wanted to know.

“He expects too much.”

“Huh!” said Mary. “All men do.”

James' eyebrows were eloquent exclamations. “Explain, Julia.”

Julia buttered a piece of bread. "The life of a professor's wife no bed of roses."

"Say!" protested Larry. "Who said he was going to marry her, anyway? He's taking her to a show, isn't he? If that's matrimony, then the Lord help the rest of us poor males!"

Julia did not laugh although the others roared, even Sue, who said, "That's what I say! What are you trying to do? Get rid of me?"

"I'll bet anyone he proposes," said Julia.

"Now, Julia," said Jimmy. "That's not a sporting proposition. Keep your bet."

"Maybe he'll be another Rufus," Rene put in with an innocent inflexion.

Gabrielle swung on her youngest sister. "What do you mean by that, Rene?"

Rene's pert face coloured like poppy petals. "Nothing," she stumbled.

Larry elaborated for her, "She means Rufus just hangs around."

"No purpose," supplemented Jimmy. "At least, not declared."

"Or is it?" inquired Julia pointedly.

James saw Gabrielle's sensitive face stiffen. "'Sufficient unto the day is the good thereof,'" he misquoted.

Gabrielle's expression cleared. "Good for you, father." She grimaced inclusively at the faces around her. "*That* for your surmises and complaints."

"One way of saying—mind your own business," Jimmy interpreted. "Please pass the tomatoes."

25

SUE moved with all the romantic suddenness of the young and thoughtless. Rene awoke one morning to find Sue's pillow smooth beside her own, a note pinned to its freshness. She tore open the envelope and read the pencilled scrawl. Without bothering about robe or slippers, she dashed down the hall to Gabrielle and Julia.

She burst into their room, shouting, "Hey, Julia! Gabrielle! Wake up! Wake up!"

Both girls sprang up in bed. "What in the world?" gasped Gabrielle, while Julia scowled ominously.

Rene waved the letter in their faces. "Sue!" she exclaimed, and sat down abruptly on the bed.

Gabrielle grabbed the note before Julia could reach it.

"DEAR FOLKS," she read aloud.

"Don't be angry, but Jerald and I will be married by the time you read this. We'll be married in Hudson, Wis., and from there we're going east for a three weeks' honeymoon.

"We'll be staying at the Plaza Hotel in New York for at least two weeks, so won't you be swell people and send us a telegram?"

"I love you all.

SUE."

The letter fell from Gabrielle's fingers. "Well!" she said. "Well, I'll be darned!"

Julia flounced out of bed. "If that isn't melodramatic! Just like Sue!"

"I think it's sweet," Gabrielle defended her sister. "And when has Sue ever been melodramatic? She's the one perfectly normal member of this family."

"Let me tell ma and father," begged Rene, now enjoying her role the bearer of such important news.

She bounced into her parents' room, closely followed by Gabrielle and Julia. "Father! Ma! Guess what!" she cried.

In the moment's silence that followed, the three girls crowded around the bed.

"Sue's eloped!" yelled Rene so loudly that everyone jumped.

"What!" chorused Mary and James.

Scornfully, Julia read the note to them.

"Whew!" said James, reaching absently for his robe. "Jolly little Sue. Who would have thought it? And why did they need to elope? We wouldn't have banned the marriage, would we, Mary?"

Mary sank back on her pillow. "Well, I never! The first marriage in the family, and it had to be like this. What will people say?"

What the family said was plenty. When the boys straggled down to breakfast, they found the kitchen buzzing with excitement. Each new arrival received the same greeting: "Sue's married!"

Jimmy said, "Huh. I'm not surprised." He patted Julia on the head and slid into his chair. "Better tie an anchor to the next one, dearie."

"Jerald's a swell guy," said Larry. "He can play good football."

"And Sue's a good cook," said David proudly. "And fun, too."

"Who wants to send the telegram?" James asked, pouring cream into his coffee and watching Mary with some surprise that she was taking it so mildly. For one thing, her best helper was lost to her. But then, Mary had acquired a certain fatalism about the children. They would go the headstrong Livingston way, in spite of everything. "And all my fault," James decided good-humouredly, for he knew that in time this, too, would be laid at his door.

"Everybody," replied Gabrielle. "Wait. I'll get pencil and paper. We'll make it collective."

"Why not collect?" asked Larry.

When Jerald and Sue arrived at their hotel in New York, they found this message awaiting them:

"Our blessings on you, children. We love you both.

THE LIVINGSTONS."

The Hales flew home in time for Jerald to resume his French classes at West River College. They occupied the guest-room at the Livingston home until they found a small house of their own near the campus. A grey shingled house with blue shutters and a blue door. Sue furnished it conventionally in maple and bright chintzes.

Although the family missed her, they were wholly pleased about her marriage. She was young, to be sure; but she was happy and well cared for. Her house was a song of praise to her housewifely art. She entered blithely into the duties of a hostess and entertained with such adroitness and spontaneity that Professor Hale's home became a favourite meeting-place for both faculty members and students.

Julia's chagrin over Jerald's capitulation to Sue's charms faded to indifference. Unless someone provoked her into remembrance, she accepted their marriage without rancour. This saved much embarrassment, for Sue and Jerald came often to the old brown house on Tenth Street.

"Much as I love Jerald," Sue confided to Gabrielle, "I miss this house and all of you."

Gabrielle slipped an arm around Sue's plump waist. "It's the house, Sue. It's so full of living."

By November of the same year it was to have another chapter added to its history. Julia laid her school plans before her father and asked his permission to use the living-room as a class-room for as many afternoons a week as she would need it.

James had listened attentively. "So this is the meaning of all your books and papers," he commented.

Julia nodded. "I figured I'd get enough ridicule when I began, so rather than have it before and after too, I kept still."

"Ridicule? Not from me, you won't." James looked up at the picture of the first Gabrielle. "Maybe a couple of the Beltrami girls are going to put a little zest into a romantic legend."

"We've been a namby-pamby lot up to now," said Julia.

"Oh, I don't know about that. But not one of you has ever set the world on fire. Or even lit the match."

"Getting married and having a batch of kids isn't enough for me."

"I suppose you want the use of the house as a background," James said. "Well, that's a compliment to the whole dynasty."

"Then I can have it? The living-room, I mean?"

"Certainly. As long as you don't inconvenience the rest of the family too much."

"I'll only use it an hour a day at the most. At first, probably an hour a week."

"When do you intend to start?"

"The first of the year. But I'll begin to advertise right away."

"What kind of advertising?"

"Newspaper."

"Won't that be expensive?"

"I have some money saved. Besides, I'll only advertise in the Sunday papers." She stretched out her feet on the footstool and absently admired the toes of her slippers.

"Is that all?" questioned James.

Julia started. "Oh, no. I have a letter which I intend to send to the mothers. You see, I want to teach girls from twelve to sixteen, so I've got to interest the mothers first."

She ran through the portable letter-file in her lap and extracted a sheet of paper. "Here it is. I haven't quite finished it yet. But I'm going to type copies of it and send them out by mail."

James looked at Julia with admiration and proceeded to read the letter:

"DEAR MADAM,

Your daughter is a lovely person, isn't she? You have given her life and livelihood, and you want life to do its best by her. She should have every joy and every advantage. Is she equipped to

meet life on its own terms? Can she take disappointment and happiness in her stride? Can she build her personality and her body to meet the competition she will have to meet? Is her mental equipment elastic? Does her attitude allow for compensation? "

James nodded. "Well, this covers a lot of ground. From there, I take it, you go into your song and dance about the merits of your course in individuality? "

Although Julia did not appreciate his phraseology, she refrained from comment and merely confirmed his guess.

He handed her the letter. "Where did you get your mailing-lists? "

Julia dropped the letter into the "M" section of her file. "I haven't any yet," she answered slowly, "but I'm going to get them from the high school files if they'll let me."

James whistled. "When are you going to do all this? "

Julia plunged. "I'm giving up my job on the fifteenth. Then I'll be able to start in earnest."

James offered no objections. Rather he encouraged her. "More power to you, Julia! "

They heard footsteps in the hall, and a second later, Mary slumped into the room. "What are you doing? " she asked.

James gave her his chair. "Talking," he replied, sitting down on the love-seat.

"About what? "

Julia's shoulders conveyed a "Well, why not now? " message to her father. James lit a cigarette and waited.

"I was telling father about my new job," Julia said, and hurried into an explanation.

Mary was aghast. "Do you mean to tell me you're going to quit your job—a real job—for such rubbish? " She swung about to face her husband. "I hope you told her she couldn't do it."

"Really, ma! " ejaculated Julia.

James moved into the storm. "Julia's old enough to do as she pleases."

Julia stood up, the letter-file clutched in both hands. "And what's more," she said, "I intend to do it."

Head high, back unbending, she stalked from the room. James chuckled. "Leaving me holding the bag," he thought.

"I suppose you encouraged her," Mary accused him.

"I certainly gave her my approval. Why not? Anybody with

such an idea and the gumption to carry it through ought to be encouraged. You should be proud of her, Mary."

"The whole thing sounds crazy to me. School of Individuality, indeed! We have too much of that around here. What if she fails? Then she'll have no job at all——"

"Why worry about failure so early in the game? I'll admit she may have tough sledding, but there's no reason in the world why she can't stick it out to success. Julia has her faults, but she's no quitter."

Mary's mouth set stubbornly. "Good jobs don't come for the asking."

James gave up. "I think I'll have a drink."

Mary watched him go with her usual sense of frustration at his drinking. Of course, he would applaud Julia. He would spur on any member of the family who chose to follow an erratic course. Again Mary had the feeling that as a family they lived on quicksands and that sooner or later their debts and shiftless ways would sink them to where even the Livingston name could not rouse an echo.

26

WITH unveiled triumph, Julia tendered her resignation to Howard Renville. He still fought his careful battle with her. His attitude was one of malign fascination coupled with the most bitter antagonism.

His blank amazement and the question springing to his eyes repaid Julia in some measure for the intolerable years she had spent in her strange relationship with this aberrant personality.

Renville toyed with the pencils on his desk. "So you're going, Miss Livingston," he said. "Of course, if you have a better opportunity, I shall be the first to wish you luck."

Bright and mocking, her eyes met her employer's expansive smile. She would tell him nothing. Let him wonder and surmise. "Thank you, Mr. Renville." Her tone was derisive. "Thank you for everything."

He rose slowly, seemed about to say something caustic, then Julia saw the impulse fade and die. He gave her an ambiguous smile and opened the door for her.

"Good-bye, Miss Livingston." He hesitated, opened his lips and

closed them on whatever he had been going to say. "Good-bye," he repeated stiffly.

She hurried out into the open, paused at the West River gate and kissed her fingers in jubilant farewell to the snow-covered campus. Exhilaration flowed through her veins. "I'm free again! I'm free!"

By the first of December, Julia had typed and mailed her letters to the mothers of her prospective students. Her advertisement had been appearing since the middle of November in the Sunday *Beacon* and *Courier*.

"How much return can I expect from my mailing-list?" she asked her father.

"Oh, about two per cent."

She groaned. "I guess I'll have to fatten the list."

By now, the entire family had gradually become educated to Julia's plan. Larry jeered at it, but David approved it thoughtfully. Anything educational appealed to his constructive sense.

Rene laughed a little over the scheme, but was reluctantly interested. After thinking it over for a day or two she ventured, "Maybe I could learn something from it, too."

"Can that be possible?" marvelled Jimmy. But Jimmy did not deride the school at all. "You've got something there," was his only comment.

Julia's gratitude for his crumb of praise surprised even herself. Gabrielle wrote a brief account of Julia's school plans to Rufus, whose comment was laconic—"It's a swell racket."

The first inquiry about her school sent a stream of excitement through Julia's body. Jimmy took the telephone call. "Go ahead. It's your nickel." A strange voice bombarded him with questions, not giving him time to get hold of Julia.

"Will you give me an exact description of your course," a mother gushed. "I'm definitely interested. But if I'm going to pay good money to send my daughter to a charm school, I must know *exactly* what I'm paying for."

Jimmy retreated hastily. "Just a minute, Madam. I'll let you talk to Miss Livingston."

He marched to the living-room and bowed low before Julia. "Miss Individuality, Mrs. Good Money hangs on the telephone wire."

Julia dashed past him and ran along the hall.

"What's she got? Ants in her pants?" Jimmy wondered to the rest of the family. "Never saw her move so fast in years."

"Hello," Julia called breathlessly into the mouthpiece. "Yes—yes, this is Miss Livingston——"

That was only the beginning. Julia had struck a rich vein of mother annoyance that continued to plague the various members of her family for months to come. The Christmas holidays did not delay her campaign for students. She added a seasonal inducement to her letters: "The ideal Christmas present for your daughter: A beginner's course of six lessons at the School of Individuality."

James chuckled over Julia's selling tactics, but he admitted their wisdom. Her first class opened before Christmas. She lectured to two girls of thirteen and fourteen, who listened with shy attention while she explained her views on individuality. In studying for the courses she intended to give, Julia had picked up a great deal of superficial knowledge herself. She had acquired a certain polish by indirection from studying the assembled theories of various experts on etiquette, clothes and charm.

Just as her interlude in Miss Crawford's shop had given her specific ideas on interior decoration, her own natural talents were now focused on the social amenities. Julia's new affectations were the subject of many jokes by Jimmy who, however, never underestimated his sister's capacity to put herself across. Again James was struck by Julia's appalling lack of the humour which to him was the very wine of existence. He applauded the idea of her school, but deplored the myopic sense applied by Julia to the fundamentals of good living. There were times when he felt that her earnestness was slightly ludicrous.

Three more girls soon registered. The students' mothers put in both verbal and physical appearances. They wished, indeed, to attend classes with their daughters, until Julia blandly informed them that no visitors were allowed unless the regular class fee was paid. She lost two students through this policy, but she felt that the ultimatum was well worth its cost. Through her contact with other parents, Julia was forced to concede a grudging respect for her own mother.

"She may nag us to death," she told Rene after one particularly unpleasant encounter, "but she didn't tag us to school or pester our teachers."

Julia's newspaper advertising brought her the publicity which she knew to be important to her scheme, although James as a lawyer was chary of the press in general. Rene informed her one morning that a reporter waited in the living-room.

Julia studied herself in the mirror. She wore a crimson house-coat.

Her blonde hair, now smoothly dressed in the manner suggested by Elle, lay against her well-shaped head like gold leaf. Her hauteur was instinctive. It was part of Julia. The reporter caught it at once as she walked into the room and announced, "I'm Julia Livingston."

He looked at her approvingly, and with the direct and intimate approach of the newspaperman, said at once, "Do you always look like this?"

Julia eyed him suspiciously, then answered candidly, "Like what?"

"Slick," he said more specifically. "I mean, the real goods, but a little bit like a movie queen, too."

Julia laughed. The reporter liked her. The house impressed him, too, and he was eager for its history. But first he took notes on Julia's conception of her school and her course of lectures. Julia stripped her description to skeleton proportions. She was a little afraid to let herself go with this indiscreet young man. She had much respect for the printed word.

When she had finished, he pointed his pencil at the first Gabrielle. "Who is she?"

"My great-great-grandmother. Her name was Gabrielle Le Duc."

He walked over to stand beneath the picture. "I've heard about her. And this house. I'd like to hear more. But you don't exploit it, do you? Your family keeps pretty much to itself."

Julia was amazed at the truth of this observation. She had never seen it in quite this light. From the inside of the house it sometimes seemed as if they stood aside from the social life of the city, but she had never come face to face with their clannishness before.

"I suppose we are rather partisan," said Julia non-committally.

"In this case, it isn't good business," the reporter warned her pleasantly.

Her eyelids drooped. "Won't you sit down?" she suggested, her voice sliding smoothly over the invitation. "Perhaps I can recapture some of the family history for you. You'll forgive me, I know, if I leave the present generation out of it."

The young man grinned. "That's all right. You represent the present generation quite adequately for my purpose."

After he had gone, Julia sat silently before Gabrielle Le Duc. "Maybe I shouldn't have done this," she thought. "It seems, somehow—sacrilegious."

But the feeling was transient. This was a modern world, and family history was as legitimate as any other kind of pull.

The reporter did Julia full justice in his story. James, however,

On Christmas Eve, James and Jimmy mixed Martinis. Even David had a weak one. To candle-light and tree-light, James distributed the mounds of packages. For Gabrielle there was a small round locket from Rufus.

She said, her eyes shining, "Rufus, it's lovely."

He fastened it about her neck. The warmth of her skin burned into his fingers. He said gently, "Merry Christmas, Gabrielle."

When Rufus said good-bye again, he touched the spring of her loneliness directly. "A second parting makes it no easier."

"But in July," she rejoiced, "you'll be home for good." And in a mist of tears, watched him go away.

In February, James made the last payment on his debt to Kit. "I'm out of the red," he jubilated as he filed Kit's receipt. "Now to stay that way."

"Is business improving?" Kit asked.

"Slightly. How's yours?"

"Always rushing. Of course," and Kit shrugged, "you know how a doctor's pay is."

James laughed. "Similar to a lawyer's, I've heard."

Breaking the calm of the winter months, Elle Atwood stormed into the Livingston *ménage* on the first of April.

"Well," James greeted her, "the sailor's in port again."

Elle gave him a withering look. "Shipwrecked is more like it."

"Shipwrecked?" echoed the assembled family.

Elle glanced about the white panelled room. "You and your snug, safe house!"

Gabrielle offered coldly, "May I get you a cup of tea?"

"A whisky and soda," retorted Elle.

"Perhaps Jimmy will get it," James suggested.

Jimmy departed reluctantly for the library. Elle withheld her explanations until he returned, carrying the liquor on a small tray. She drank the whisky neat. Then she rushed into her story. . . .

"Hamilton Rose lost my money," she began. "Three hundred thousand dollars! What do you think of that?"

"Goodness, Elle," said James, genuinely concerned. "Calm down. What do you mean? How did Hamilton Rose lose your money?"

"Scandal?" hinted Jimmy brightly.

"Oh, for heaven's sake!" Elle bounced angrily in her chair. "Well, Raleigh left most of his money and investments in Hamilton's care. He didn't trust me. The investments hit bottom, and I'm out——"

"Three hundred thousand dollars," whistled Jimmy.

"How much have you left?" James pinned her down.

"About a hundred thousand."

Her audience gasped. James snorted. "What are you kicking about, Elle? You can live on that for the rest of your life."

"But I'm used to better things," argued Elle.

Jimmy roared. "There are lots of old clothes up in the attic, Aunt Elle. Maybe you could make over some of them."

"To hide your nakedness," said Larry.

James cut through the subdued snicker that travelled around the room. Knowing Elle, he gauged the measure of her consternation. It was a big loss, unquestionably. "What do you want me to do about it?" he asked more kindly.

"You're a lawyer, aren't you? Investigate, of course. I'll pay any fee you ask."

"Oh, boy!" Jimmy rubbed his hands together. "Here's where we do some high financing."

James asked, "Have you talked to Hamilton at all?"

"No. I was in Cuba when I got his telegram and his letter. I took the first boat to New York and came straight here."

"All right," said James. "I'll leave in the morning. Don't look so worried, Elle. At your age, anger's hard to take."

"Who wouldn't be angry?" Mary demanded. "Losing all that money."

Elle was so disturbed that the efforts of the family to divert her by making her talk about her travels were unavailing.

James wired Rufus that he was going to Chicago.

"We'll paint the town," he prophesied, kissing Mary good-bye, and thinking how good it was to be facing a few days of freedom.

"Drink it up most likely," Mary told him realistically.

"Not a bad idea!"

During James' absence, Kit called at the house. It was early evening, and a chill wind whipped around doors and windows. David let him into the hall.

"Hi, Dave!"

"Hi!" He tried to match the doctor's long steps to the living-room. "Aunt Elle's here."

Elle was reading before the fire. She greeted Kit delightedly, "How nice to see you!"

"I didn't know you were in town," Kit confessed lamely.

"Is it a pleasant surprise?"

"Oh, very."

David slipped from the room, and Kit and Elle faced each other across the hearth.

"Raw night," Kit said.

"But so cosy in here."

"Yes, it is." He smiled at her. "You're looking great, Elle." It was always surprising to Kit to find Elle so perennially young in appearance. Remembering how long ago he had paid her court, it made him feel a little more youthful himself.

Elle sighed. "It's a wonder. I've been beside myself with worry. I've lost nearly all my money, Kit."

Elle was in the middle of explaining about her lost investments when Gabrielle entered the room determinedly. "Hello, Kit. David said you were here."

Kit sprang to his feet. "Good evening, Gabrielle. Won't you join us?"

As Gabrielle told Jimmy later, "Elle could have committed murder without blinking. But since looks don't kill, she tried to ignore me. But I'm much too old to be squelched in such a fashion."

"You women!" was Jimmy's comment.

Larry sauntered into the library where Jimmy and Gabrielle were talking. He stretched his long, handsome body on the sofa. Larry had been restless lately. The reason was suddenly apparent. "Jim, how's chances of getting a job with Rufus?" he asked.

"Oh, Larry!" protested Gabrielle.

Jimmy scowled at his younger brother. "Keep to the pavements, kid."

"What do you think I've been doing?"

"Join the C.C.C. then. It would do you good."

"Nothing doing," Larry growled.

"You should be a good salesman," Gabrielle said reflectively. "You can talk yourself into and out of anything. If that isn't a gift, I don't know what is."

"He looks too young," vetoed Jimmy.

Larry flared, "I'll be seventeen next month."

"You ought to go to the University," Gabrielle said. "You know father wants to send you."

"On what? Buttons?"

"Oh, I think he'd manage," said Gabrielle.

"Well," Jimmy surrendered unwillingly, "you can talk to Albin Smith. He doesn't feel obligated to this family like Rufus does. May-

he he could use you in the stock-room. Then if whiskers ever come your way, you could sell." He stood up, yawning, "Ole sandman's got me. I'm going to bed."

Gabrielle and Larry remained in the library. The peace of the room was deep in both their spirits. Jimmy always brought edginess with him. Gabrielle picked up a book. Larry rattled absently through the evening *Beacon*.

Presently he ventured, "Gabrielle——"

"Yes?"

"You know Rufus better than anyone. Do you think I might eventually sell for him?"

"Why not?"

The handsome dark head tilted proudly, "Sure, why not?"

He saw Albin Smith the next day. Albin, whether Jimmy realized it or not, recognized Rufus' affection for the Livingston family. He knew that Rufus would have wanted Larry to have a job, so Albin placed him temporarily in the shipping room.

"We'll see how you get along," he said.

Larry grinned into Albin's narrow, freckled face. "I'll get along."

The week ended before James returned from Chicago. Immediately upon reaching the house, he called Elle into the library to discuss her financial affairs privately. It was difficult at all times to find seclusion with their *en famille* way of living. He told her at once that the news he had for her was not good.

"The money you lost had originally been invested by Raleigh," he explained. "Hamilton was simply carrying out his instructions. Under the circumstances, you can hardly prosecute Hamilton. You can, of course, turn your affairs over to another solicitor; but I wouldn't advise it. Hamilton is no fly-by-night, and he knows your business *verbatim*."

"So Raleigh is responsible for this!"

James shook his head at her. "Spare your tantrums, Elle. I'm not impressed. And I'm sure Raleigh isn't. Besides, Raleigh was a darn good husband."

Fires smouldered deep beyond the coldness in Elle's eyes. "I know, I know, James. But don't tell me you wouldn't be enraged if you had lost all that money."

James walked over to the liquor-cabinet. "Naturally. But I think I'd grin and bear it if I still had a hundred thousand to my credit." He threw open the cabinet doors. "How about a drink?"

"A double Scotch."

Elle lingered in Riverside. Always apprehensive about her hold on Kit, Gabrielle knew what her aunt's stay implied. Yet there was little she could do but watch Elle's persistent campaign. What Kit thought or how he felt, Gabrielle could not even guess. It was hard for her to analyse her own feelings, for she hated to admit that it was common jealousy that stirred her to such watchful scrutiny of Kit's relations with Elle. She knew she had no claim on Kit whatever, yet she felt that Elle's persistent efforts to arouse his interest were grossly unfair. He was always attentive, always courteous to Elle. He accepted her invitations occasionally, but so far as Gabrielle knew he never made any advances of his own.

Elle and Julia held to a thin friendship. Elle, more than anyone else, appreciated the future of Julia's school; and her attitude formed a bond between them. Yet they didn't actually like each other. They were too full of mutual knowledge.

Julia's class enrolment increased with the close of the high schools for the summer months. She lectured three hours a week to elementary and advanced classes, each of which had six members. By July, three new students had joined the elementary class, so she scheduled their lectures for Saturday morning.

Mary complained about her use of the living-room, saying that the house didn't seem to belong to the family any longer. James suggested the library as being more secluded. Accordingly, Julia rearranged the furniture and conducted her classes from behind its back-front desk. Her students were delighted with the change. They liked the book-lined room; the portraits hanging above the bookcases; the glass case of journals and diaries.

One girl asked Julia about the portraits, and Julia named their originals: "The first James Livingston. His son, James, and James II's wife, Ann Severs. This is my grandfather, James III, and his wife, Beth Johnstone."

The students thought all the Jameses singularly alike in physique and feature. They admired Beth Johnstone's fresh, vibrant loveliness; but they turned away from Ann Severs' strangely bewitching face. They waited eagerly for Julia to disclose their history, but Julia did not elaborate upon their lives, nor did she leave an opening for questions. She went firmly into her lecture on "Relative Morals." As she was beginning, Elle tiptoed into the room and slipped into a chair. Julia paid no attention to her, but her annoyance revealed itself in a crisp tone that belied all her carefully acquired poise.

"This school," Julia began, "is not primarily interested in your

morals. I have neither the desire nor the qualifications to teach you religion. Your good and your bad points interest me only to the extent that they affect your personality. You may well inform me that your virtues and vices are an integral part of your individuality. They are you. Certainly. But in speaking to you"—her staccato voice smoothed to round, full speech—"I recognize no moral evil in any of you. Bad taste, bad manners, yes. But I am not your conscience, not your pastor or your priest. I am an agent for your individuality. As your moral viewpoints affect the outer manifestations of your personality, thus only am I concerned with them."

Elle's pouncing attention was lost to Julia in her own flow of words. "Smoking has ceased to be a moral issue. It is a habit, as is eating candy or chewing gum. It has a bearing on your health rather than your morals. To what degree it shares in the length of your life is problematical. Your doctor is the only person to answer that question.

"Lying, cheating, stealing, obviously destroy poise, culture, happiness. They are sifting sand, and no foundation can stand on them."

Her voice held now a quiet power. "Your sex life is cumulative. It grows in you and with you. It is beautiful or ugly as you make it. Promiscuity is an evil because, in its larger sense, it fails to reap a reward. Its only harvest is regret. There is nothing dogmatic or personal in that statement. It is general, but its relationship to beauty is essential. In indulging in promiscuity, you have no individuality; you have scattered yourself. A part of you here; a part of you there. You have, indeed, lost the reason for being. Neither your body nor your mind can be shared in a wholesale manner. Both are priceless, not only to you as the giver, but to the recipient. If they are given and taken without valuation, what are they worth? Nothing. Nothing at all. For carelessness has no worth. Careless dress, careless manners, careless words, careless morals. It is a circle, always revolving, always meeting itself.

"In its rightful place, sex has no ugliness. A woman's beauty lights inwardly and glows outwardly. Her sex is no less her beauty than her mouth. Beauty is never flaunted. Neither is sex. Both are delicate and subtle. Neither is bought or bartered.

"You can't be beautiful and have a carnal mind. You can't be brassy and poised at the same time. Somewhere, somehow, you're going to slip. It is the inexorable law of compensation. Cultivation must be constant and thorough or your crop is mediocre or worthless. Mediocrity and worthlessness bring no price. You are asking the best that life can give you. Your handiwork must have a like value."

A hush followed her words. Then Julia asked, "Mary Jane, will you open the discussion?"

Elle floated through the sea of questions and answers. When Julia had dismissed the class, and the last student had straggled out of the room, Elle slithered out of her chair. "Like a cat," Julia thought, gathering up her notes and class lists.

Elle approached her in a leisurely manner. She faced her niece across the polished mahogany desk. Julia was backed by Elle's mother—a gentler, warmer counterpart of her daughter.

"Julia, I'm surprised at you. I would never have believed you were such a Puritan."

Julia's smile cradled triumph in its curve. "I'm smart," she said.

28

RUFUS did not return to Riverside in July. He wrote to Gabrielle, "I can't leave the business now. I haven't an idea when I can. Not this summer, anyway."

Nor did he come in the fall or the winter.

Gabrielle did not sit at home and wait for him. She went out with friends of Jimmy and Jerald Hale when she had time for any recreation, but most of her evenings were taken up with her music. She never met anyone whose friendship or whose courtship replaced Rufus in her affections. Certainly not Hal Petri, who took her out several times and who decided he wanted her badly, but not badly enough to marry her.

"Why not, Gabrielle?" he inquired casually. "You like me. I like you. I like you a damn lot. It's just a modern proposition."

Gabrielle drew herself out of his eager arms. Her mouth twisted distastefully as her glance travelled from his face to the familiar lines of the hall. She was glad of the friendliness of the walls, of their knowledge. They made Petri seem incredibly cheap.

She said, "It's not that I'm a prude. I'm not so sheltered that I rule out sex and its implications. But sex as a pastime doesn't appeal to me. I'm just old-fashioned enough to pass up promiscuity."

Hal's lips curled. "Don't give me that line," he scoffed. "You went around with Rufus Drake for years. Drake never went with any girl for nothing."

* Cheeks whitening, Gabrielle handed him his hat. "We won't discuss it," she said. She added thoughtfully, "But I imagine if Rufus were here, he would push your face in."

Jerald's friend, Jon Bridgewater, a chemistry assistant at West River College, proposed to Gabrielle after their second meeting. But he had not even brushed the surface of her heart. She refused him gently but firmly.

Sue lamented over the telephone, "Jon's really cut up about it, Gabrielle."

"But, Sue, I don't love him."

"But it would have been so much fun—your being married to a professor, too!"

"Sorry. I simply couldn't oblige."

Jimmy pretended concern over his sisters' lack of altar appeal.

"Don't jump to conclusions," Julia rebuked him. "At least, it's not because I haven't been asked."

"I'm from Missouri," returned Jimmy. "How about this new chap——"

"If you mean Gene Ravell——"

"How should I remember? They come and go, come and go."

Julia's anger flamed. "You're much too——"

"Nosy," put in Gabrielle, her laughter spilling over Julia's temper. "Anyway, Jimmy, maybe our young men are as slow at popping the question as you are."

"Score!" laughed Jimmy, whose constantly changing girl friends were a source of much comment in the Livingston household.

"How about driving me over to Mr. Dumas?" Gabrielle asked. "I've a lesson to-night."

"Nothing but a chauffeur," Jimmy sighed. "Are you sure father hasn't got the car?"

"He's in bed," Gabrielle replied. "Nursing a cold."

All during November, Gabrielle had been singing her complete repertoire of operas for Dumas. She sang *Madam Butterfly*, *Tosca*, *La Bohème*.

To-night she went through the *Contessa* in *Le Nozze Di Figaro*. She was exhausted when she finished.

Dumas was silent for some time. Although letter perfect in the roles, there was still the emotional block that kept her from conveying any sense of dramatic intensity. He sighed, knowing that technically she was ready now to step into the concert field, but that her development was still woefully incomplete.

"Would you like me to arrange a concert tour, Gabrielle?" he asked. "First, of course, a recital."

She hesitated. "What about my year abroad?"

"If you were any other person, I would urge you to go now," he told her frankly. "But you go slowly into emotion, Gabrielle. The fire of your Gallic ancestry is tempered by your English blood. You are happy and content, and ambition burns like a steady fire within you, where it ought to be a consuming flame. One of these days you're going to wake up and then you'll be equal to anything. For I'm sure the capacity is there. I can't believe that you aren't ready for any experience. Opera demands everything that one has. And if it isn't there, it can't be simulated." He paused a moment, his fingers running through the pages of *Le Nozze Di Figaro*.

"You're quite ready for concert work," he assured her, "and I think you should be successful at it."

She met his gaze. "That's a detour, isn't it?"

"Usually. Concert singing should come after opera."

"Then I'll wait. I want the best there is or nothing."

Gabrielle left Dumas with a blistering sense of failure. Quite definitely now she knew that she had fallen short of what he had expected from her, and her knowledge that her inadequacy was emotional did not help matters. She talked to her father that night about her decision, but did not dwell on her own feeling of failure.

"Of course," James reminded her, "concert work would help to finance your year abroad."

"Yes, but I might grow comfortable and lazy and decide that concert singing was enough for me."

"Well?"

Excitement stained her cheeks. "Applause isn't what I want, father. Or money. But satisfaction. The joy that goes with first-rate accomplishment. That seems to me to be the very essence of living, father."

"Out of the mouth of babes," James murmured.

"Personally," said Elle from the doorway, "I think it's a lot of downright foolishness. High sounding sentiment and not much else."

"How does it concern you?" demanded Gabrielle.

"All this talk of opera and concert tours! How do you know you'll get that far?"

"She has a fine voice," James said.

"So have millions of other people. How many of them ever get to be top notch stars? You'll probably end up in some third-rate

Italian opera company."

"So what?" cried Gabrielle. "The loss'll be mine."

"Don't be childish. You don't think you're going to send yourself abroad, do you? When it comes right down to going, someone's going to finance you. That's common sense."

"Well, it won't be you," said Gabrielle.

"You bet it won't. It'll probably be your father and the rest of the family tossing in their little extras so you can have your little fling of glory."

"The trouble with you, Elle," James said, "is that you're not a bit concerned over the rest of the family. You're so damned jealous of Gabrielle, you can't see straight."

"Oh! You might as well talk to a couple of posts!" Elle flounced out of the room.

By the end of nineteen thirty-five, Jimmy was chafing openly about his routine work for the Drake Candy Company. "Same old stuff year in, year out," he told his father. "It's getting me."

"Unrest," James sighed. "The curse of our generation."

"Except Gabrielle."

James nodded in agreement. "Gabrielle takes life as she finds it. She has patience and is a worker. All of us aren't gaited that way."

Jimmy's pacing carried him back and forth across the library. "I suppose I could hang out my shingle," he mused. "But with all due respect to the legal profession, father—it doesn't put red blood in your veins."

James lifted sceptical eyebrows. "I can't say that I know where your statement's leading, Jimmy."

"To something different."

James folded his newspaper and tossed it on the desk. "Oh, yes, I know. Exploration. New worlds to conquer."

"Everything's not been done."

James ran his hands through his hair. "Lord! If I were only young enough to discover that again!"

Jimmy sat on top of the desk. His grandfather's fine blue eyes rested on his shining head. "Funny," he said. "I sound just like Julia." His thin shoulders lifted. "I guess we're all alike—or is it something else?"

"I suppose it's the old family strain, Jimmy. It skipped me, but your grandfather and your great-grandfather had it, and here you all are, doing minor things but with big expectations. Gabrielle, of course, stands apart. She has talent. Perhaps it's an old strain break-

ing into an old world." James glanced up at the portrait of James Livingston II. "I hesitate to speak of this. You'll probably think me a superstitious old dud. And maybe I am—as far as this family's concerned. You've heard the story of the second James Livingston often enough——"

"Oh, I get you. How he said, 'To hell with the law profession,' and struck out as a common, ordinary storekeeper."

James nodded. "And how his father objected because he had wanted to found, in tradition and fact, a line of lawyers. The first James' words have been handed down for generations, and so I'll hand them down to you. But without rancour, mind you. '*You'll never prosper, neither your business nor your marriage. Neither your sons nor daughters. Unless your first son follows in fact the way this family was meant to go.*'"

"Hard old nut, wasn't he?"

"Ironically enough, the second James was never wholly successful. His love life was about the choicest bit of hell you could imagine. None of his children amounted to anything except my father, and he, as you know, was the best lawyer in the state. Could have been governor if he'd wanted to."

Jimmy lit a cigarette. "You're not advocating the family curse?"

"Certainly not. I'm just telling you."

"Warning me. Well, we'll see, father. But I'm afraid I'll be like Jimmy the second and take my chances."

As spring stepped slowly on its way, Elle packed her bags and announced that she was leaving for Chicago. The Livingstons saw her to the train with secret jubilation. No one was happier to see her go than Mary, who resented Elle's feline grace and laziness around the house. "Home is home once more," she said when James unlocked the front door.

Hot summer parched the city. The mercury climbed into July. Paul Dumas took a trip to Duluth to escape the heat; and in his absence Gabrielle neglected her voice lessons. Who could sing in such weather, she excused herself, shuffling through her music.

Mary raised tired eyes from the *Sunday Beacon*. "Who can do anything?"

Gabrielle went to the windows and pushed aside the curtains. "Not a breath of air."

Mary found Julia's advertisement and read it through as she did every Sunday. Then she dropped the newspaper on the floor and turned to her younger daughter, querulousness running through her

words: "When are you going to earn something with your voice, Gabrielle? It seems to me you've been taking lessons long enough."

Gabrielle leaned on the window-sill. "I wish I knew," she thought, discouragement deep within her. Aloud she said, "Just as soon as my dramatic power and my voice click together. That is to say, I'll do something with my voice then. But when I'll make money with it, I haven't any idea."

James strolled into the room. "How'd you two like to go to a movie? An air-conditioned one?"

"I would." Mary accepted the invitation promptly.

"Sorry, father, I can't. I have a date."

"Anybody interesting?" James asked.

"Well—nice. Johnny Wagner."

"Hmm." James searched through the paper for the theatre advertisements. "Can't say that I remember the young man. Have I met him?"

"No, Jimmy brought him around last week. You were out."

The telephone rang in the hall.

"I'll answer it," Gabrielle said. "It's probably one of Julia's mothers."

29

FALL ran crisply at the heels of summer.

Gabrielle went on a buying spree. She purchased a green wool dress with a swing skirt quilted at the hem, and a yellow ascot tucked into a high neckline. She tried on a rust-coloured taffeta evening dress that buttoned from throat to ruffled hem, and couldn't resist it.

For days she debated the purchase of a fur coat and finally succumbed to an expensive black caracal. Then she decided on a yellow hat and black slippers. She searched from store to store for a yellow bag but compromised on a black suède. Her last acquisition was a pair of yellow suède gloves.

She modelled the new clothes for the family. The Livingstons, unused to flurries of this sort in Gabrielle, couldn't believe their eyes.

"What got into you?" asked Jimmy.

"I don't know," Gabrielle confessed. "Unless I simply got tired of seeing myself look such a dud."

"I'll bet it's because Rufus is coming home," Larry surmised.

Gabrielle coloured brightly, but she did not deny the suggestion. 'Rufus' expectations of returning to Riverside in August had not been realized. Gabrielle had begun to despair of his ultimate arrival. However, the last of September, she received a telegram which lifted her on her toes with anticipation:

"Home for good. Arrive Saturday evening seven-fifteen Union Station. Love. RUFUS."

Saturday dawned clear and sharply cold. At six o'clock a stiff wind gave Gabrielle the excuse she wanted to wear her fur coat. Julia watched her button the high collar about her throat.

"Do you think you can compete with Rufus' Chicago friends?" she asked scornfully.

Gabrielle responded calmly, "Why should I want to?" A swift rush of anger suffused her, augmenting the colour in her cheeks, darkening her eyes. "Haven't you ever been glad to wear something new? Well, I am. And I don't care who knows it."

She picked up her purse and gloves and stalked from the room. The train was a few minutes late, and Gabrielle stood impatiently on the platform. The long separation from Rufus had failed to clarify their relations. She was just as uncertain now as she had always been about her feeling for him. Was it possible to be so eager to see someone and still not love him? Her intelligence denied the possibility; yet affection was warm through her body.

Through an unexpected film of tears, she saw the train pull in. Her throat contracted and the tears spilled over when Rufus took the steps at a jump and caught her in his arms.

"Gabrielle——" Then he looked at her. "But—tears?"

She laughed shakily. "It's just that I'm so glad to see you."

He kissed her again. "That goes double for me." He held her at arms' length. "I never saw you look more lovely."

"I have a new coat, Rufus, and a new hat!"

He laughed happily. "I said *you*!"

He might have been one of them, so pleased were the Livingstons to welcome him home. They urged him to stay with them until he found an apartment to his liking. Rufus acquiesced, but he assured Mary, "I won't bother you long. My valet is going house hunting right away."

"Don't be in a hurry," Mary said with unaccustomed graciousness.

But Rufus was not one to trespass on hospitality. He and his man, Cole, decided upon an apartment two days later.

Rufus took Gabrielle horseback riding, dancing, to the Sunday Symphony concerts, to countless movies. Finally she called a halt after they had returned home from seeing *Yes, My Darling Daughter* at the old Lyric theatre.

"I'll have to get back to the old order, Rufus. The pace is beginning to tell on me."

"Forgive me, Gabrielle. I should have known better. But for some reason, I hate to let you out of my sight."

She tossed her gloves and bag on an end table. "Sit down, Rufus."

He took one of the wing-chairs. "You wrote me about Dumas' objection to your going abroad—at least for the present. Is the situation still the same?"

"I'm afraid so."

"Are you singing as much as usual?"

She smiled. "Not since you came back."

"Don't expect me to apologize. I don't feel like it. It seemed forever, Gabrielle. Not seeing you."

"Don't apologize. I've had a good time, too." She became serious.

"But Monday begins the old regime."

"The voice still rules the roost?" His eyes yearned over her.

She countered, "Some day, Rufus, I want to sing at the Metropolitan."

For an inexplicable reason, he did not say, "But my love won't stop you, darling!" Instead he said, "I want you to, Gabrielle."

She rose to her slender height, stretching slightly, and looked at him with searching candour. "Then we understand each other."

He made no dissent, but a curious voice within him debated her statement. After that Rufus withdrew a little into himself and made fewer claims on Gabrielle's time.

While Gabrielle was singing *Casta Diva* on Monday evening, Larry opened the door to Elle Atwood. She greeted her nephew and shoved her bags into the astounded Larry's hands. She broke cheerfully into *Norma's* prayer with a brisk, "Hello, Gabrielle."

After a moment, Gabrielle recovered her breath. "For heaven's sake—Aunt Elle!"

"The bad penny," Elle added specifically, and waited to be contradicted. She rushed disgruntled after the unfruitful pause. "Where's James and Mary?"

"Playing cards with the Bergs."

Elle stripped off her gloves. "And everyone else?"

"Out. Except David and Larry. They're somewhere around."

From the doorway, Larry announced, "Well, I'm here." Sourly he asked his aunt, "Shall I put your suitcases in the guest-room?"

Elle nodded, thinking how handsome Larry was. He had inherited the good looks of the Livingston men and missed the careless, haphazard look that Jimmy often presented.

Larry groaned under the implication of the luggage rather than its weight. "I wonder if she's going to be a perennial visitor," he grumbled as he went up the stairs.

Elle slipped out of her coat and tossed its satiny mink folds over a chair.

"Are you staying for the holidays?" Gabrielle inquired, watching her settle gracefully on the love-seat.

"Perhaps." Elle pulled off her Cossack turban. "I was at loose ends, so——"

"You thought of us," pounced Gabrielle.

Elle's eyes narrowed. "I must say you are not very gracious to me, darling. Perhaps you should attend Julia's school."

Gabrielle said sweetly, "After you, Aunt Elle."

"Well!" Elle sprang to her feet. "This could go on and on." She started to collect her belongings. Fingering the green suede gloves, she leaned thoughtfully against a chair. "I wonder if you resent me because of Kit? Are you in love with Kit, Gabrielle?"

Gabrielle's body pressed against the keyboard. "Did you come because of Kit?" she asked.

Elle's smile thinned to secretiveness. "Funny—but I think he'll be glad to see me."

Gabrielle smiled, too, but hers held a triumphant tilt. "No doubt he would be. But he left for California this evening."

"California!"

"Yes. For a month's vacation."

Elle recovered her poise. "Oh, well, there will be other times." She yawned daintily. "Good night, Gabrielle."

When he paid a brief visit to Gabrielle on Thursday evening, Rufus met Elle. She liked him, as she admired all personable young men.

"You ought to marry him while you've got the chance," she told her niece after he had left.

"Perhaps he hasn't asked me," Gabrielle said.

Elle's arched brows pondered the statement. "He doesn't look slow to me."

James glanced up from a copy of *Esquire*. "Maybe he's just considerate."

Gabrielle disregarded Elle's sniff. She stared at her father. "Maybe you're right," she said.

Elle laughed derisively. "You don't think you're the only one in Rufus' life if you give him only your presence."

James' glance sharpened over his magazine. Gabrielle said with quiet scorn, "Oh, the double standard."

"If you like," Elle conceded. "Although you could scarcely call it that to-day. Women have taken that standard as their own, too."

"Fair enough, isn't it?" asked her niece.

"Well! Then you don't believe it's the woman who pays and pays?"

Gabrielle's eyes danced. "What's that got to do with it? We were speaking of relative values, weren't we?"

"We were talking about your relationship to Rufus," said Elle shortly.

"Then we must have got off the subject," said Gabrielle.

James chuckled and turned a page.

Undressing for bed, Gabrielle reviewed her conversation with Elle, and came reluctantly to the conclusion that undoubtedly her aunt was right. She folded her petticoat thoughtfully. "If I were in love with Rufus, it would break my heart," she thought, putting away her lingerie in a dresser drawer. But she carried her reflections and her honesty further: "If I were in love with him, our friendship wouldn't have lasted on laughter and kisses. It would have reached intensity before now."

Sleep came to her slowly. She did not want to think of Rufus' acceptance of another woman's body. But the thought persisted. How could he? Yet she was sure that if Rufus and she were married he would be faithful to her all his life. From this point she was forced into uneasy speculation. Had her father, who obviously did not love her mother, ever been unfaithful to her? Indeed—was he unfaithful to her?

Then there was Kit. Dumas, too. To whom did they turn for physical satisfaction? Surely not to one of those houses— And Jimmy, who brushed lightly from girl to girl. What was his quest?

She tossed restlessly, pursuing the unfamiliar line of thought. Why was sexual release so necessary to a man? And why was his promiscuity condoned, just as she was condoning it now, when chastity was so highly prized in woman?

Suddenly she laughed at herself. "In my next lifetime," she decided, "I'll have to be a man so that I can find out."

THE Livingstons paced through a leisurely dinner. While Elle dined with a friend, her relatives basked in their privacy. The old mahogany gleamed in candle-light. The figured wallpaper played its life in shadows. Nowhere in the house did James' thoughts return so often to the Livingston heritage as they did in this glimmering room.

To-night his eyes strayed from his plate of roast pork and mashed potatoes to the other plates of food that absorbed his family.

"James," said Mary, "you're not eating."

"No," James agreed. "I've suddenly found manna, and it has a sweeter taste."

Jimmy laid down his fork. "Come across, father."

"An idea has just occurred to me." His gaze switched from one attentive face to another. "A motley, altogether handsome lot," he thought whimsically. "That such a variety of minds and faces should come from a fundamental source astounds me."

He saw that they were growing restless. He came to the point. "You remember our conversation a while back, Jimmy? Well, I've been mulling it over. And all I can think of is food. It might not be a bad idea."

Their expressions changed as if a wind had rustled over the table.

"Whatever are you talking about?" asked Mary.

"He means, why don't I start a restaurant?" Jimmy decided.

"Why don't *we*?" James corrected.

"The whole damn family!" gasped Jimmy.

"As many as are interested."

It was Jimmy's turn to stare around the table. "Yeah," he said. "I could handle the business end. Julia could be the hostess——"

"Wait a minute! Wait a minute!" cried Julia. "If I'm in on this, I'd like to know what it's all about."

"This town could stand a good after-theatre place," Jimmy mused.

"Why not a tea-room?" asked Julia.

"Oh, yes. Something unusual!" said Gabrielle.

Jimmy mopped his forehead. "Whew! Just like that we have a career."

Mary shrank against her chair. Why had she married into such a family?

David, too, looked bewildered. "Are you going to do it? Really?" "Of course we are," Julia asserted. She was on edge with the burning fever of achievement.

"It's going to cost a lot of dough," Jimmy reminded them.

Their enthusiasm sobered. Mary broke the lull. "Do you mean to tell me you would all give up good jobs for this pipe dream?"

"Not all of us," James reassured her. "I couldn't, of course. I merely made the suggestion."

"Nor I," said Gabrielle. "But I'll be glad to help."

"Julia threw over her job for a pipe dream," Larry remarked.

"Well, she's not ahead any," Mary put in quickly. "It takes all she makes for upkeep."

The family snickered. Julia's upkeep was purely a personal matter of clothes, coiffures and facial treatments. Julia flushed angrily. "I get along."

All at once, it was not enough for her. The restaurant opened up new vistas of fortune and activity. She would follow it through, she thought, whether anyone else contributed their help or not. However prosaic and hackneyed the plan might actually appear, it would be a shorter trail to the main highway than her school had been.

The restaurant idea slumbered through Christmas. Christmas Eve was deep in snow, and Christmas Day skidded over icy streets. This was the first Christmas in many years that Kit had spent away from the Livingstons, and Gabrielle missed him a great deal. At dinner Elle asked, "Why so pensive, Gabrielle?"

And Gabrielle answered before she thought, "I was wondering what Kit is doing to-day."

In malicious playfulness, Elle shook her head at Rufus, "You'd better keep an eye on your property!"

"What are you, Gabrielle?" jested Larry. "Lot or acre?"

Dumas had joined them for the day. He spoke quietly in Gabrielle's defence. "I miss Christopher, too. But it was about time he had a change and a rest from his continual round here. A doctor's life is more of a treadmill than most."

James lifted his wine-glass. "A toast for Kit!"

"*Auld Lang Syne!*" cried Jimmy.

They sang it lustily for Kit.

Rufus put a correct valuation upon Gabrielle's affection for the doctor and did not mention the incident to her. Yet he thought with a certain bleakness, "What could I say to her if she did love him? She's mine, and she isn't mine. How long can I hold out for that?"

Watching Gabrielle's intent face, Rufus felt that his relations were due for change one way or the other. Their equability was getting on his nerves.

On New Year's Eve he brought her violets and a misty handkerchief on a brilliant clasp. She wore her rust evening gown. The violets gave the dress an exultant note.

Rufus helped her into her coat. His hands lingered a moment on her shoulders. "Each time I look at you," he said, "I find you more desirable."

She smiled at him over her shoulder. "Somehow, Rufus, this seems a very special night." A deep tenderness for him stemmed from a wish that her love for him were strong enough to sweep her into full acknowledgment of his desire.

They met Julia's escort at the door. To Gabrielle, he seemed as negative as many of the young men with whom Julia spent her time—a medium blond, exceptionally tall, much too polite.

Rufus and Gabrielle joined Jimmy and a dark-haired Irish girl at the Hammond Café. They ordered a round of drinks—Martinis for Rufus and Gabrielle; a Scotch and soda for Jimmy; a Manhattan for Betty Mallory. The dance-floor was crowded, but no one minded. They danced to *Sugar Blues* and an old request—*I Love You Truly*.

"Song after song," Jimmy chanted, "drink after drink. Oh, in the morning how we'll——"

"Jimmy!" gasped Betty Mallory.

"Have another drink," Jimmy suggested, "and you won't even notice the whither of my poetry. Genius never should be curbed. It's like nature——"

"What will he be like after a few more?" Rufus grinned at Gabrielle.

"I'm only sticking up for life in the raw," Jimmy protested. "If poetry is poetry, and nature is nature, then what more natural than an odour being——"

"An odour," put in Gabrielle.

"Neat," applauded Jimmy. "Come on, Gabrielle, let's swing it."

Dennis Peters took Julia to the Colonial Room at the Wiltshire Hotel. Julia had never looked better. Her hair shone above drifting turquoise brocade. Her eyes caught the colour of turquoise eardrops that swung from her ears. Yellow roses clung to the shoulder of her gown. Dennis was to her liking. He was suave, his elaborate front cloaking a grasping hold on life. He danced well and he drank well,

and he surrounded Julia with inconsequential conversation, half gallant, half gay.

His gallantry was so marked that Julia said, as he returned her to their table after a fox-trot, "You belong to another era, Dennis. The age of cloak and ruff."

"I disagree. I would never cover a mud puddle for Queen Elizabeth. Of course, for you—that would be different."

"I wonder," said Julia shrewdly.

"Why wonder? Isn't acceptance easier and more pleasant?"

She smiled. "But how wise?"

"A woman was never meant for wisdom. She was meant to be beautiful and——"

"Dumb. I told you you were born too late. This is an emancipated generation."

"Emancipated for what? A pay cheque and standing up in street-cars."

"The pay cheque is a pretty good idea."

Dennis shook his head. "Those other women didn't have to sweat for it."

Julia finished her Sidecar. "Who knows?"

Later in the evening, two hilarious couples and two stags joined them. Dennis presented the new arrivals to Julia, who responded politely until he introduced Jeffry Lane, adding "Universally known as Heartbreaker Lane, man about town."

Julia took in a tall, strongly built young man with a football player's shoulders, a narrow waist, narrow hips. His hair was a flaming red; his features were regular except for a faintly crooked twist to his mouth. Julia's mechanical acknowledgment had thickened on her tongue. Her "How do you do, Mr. Lane" scarcely encompassed the surge of emotion that claimed her.

Jeffry's eyes brightened over her. "Not bad," he thought. "Not bad at all." He asked aloud, "Shall we dance?"

Julia could only nod. She felt his hand at her elbow, his arms around her, the movement of his body close to hers. She clung to this moment, knowing it would never come again.

Jeffry said, "I think we should see more of each other."

And Julia responded, "There's no law against it."

During their third dance, Jeffry said significantly, "It's a queer world. I almost didn't come here to-night."

Julia said, surprising herself with such extreme candour, "I'm glad you came."

"You grow on me. If you keep it up, I won't be able to let you out of my sight by the end of the evening."

Julia tried to deny him. "Heartbreaker Lane," she bantered.

"I'll sue Peters for defamation of character."

Later Julia wondered what she said to Dennis Peters when he took her home after wheat cakes and sausages in the Wiltshire Coffee Shop. She only knew that Jeffry had promised to call her the next afternoon.

Because she was tired, she slept late. She awoke at noon, lax against the pillows, her head throbbing dully. "Too many cocktails," she remembered. Her eyes wandered to Gabrielle, her hair ruffled, her cheeks pale in sleep. Quite suddenly Julia remembered Jeffry Lane.

She slid out of bed and looked at herself in the dressing-table mirror. She shuddered and hid her eyes with her hand. She wanted freshness and order to enjoy her love. To savour the thrilling current of excitement that ran through her body and all her being.

She bathed and was pulling up the zipper of her house-coat when Gabrielle awoke and blinked at her sleepily.

"Time to get up? "

"One o'clock, lazy-bones! "

Gabrielle sat up and pushed a riot of curls out of her eyes. "Goodness, you look positively radiant! And you weren't in yet when I crawled into bed."

Julia busied herself straightening the littered dressing-table. "A hot bath did it," she said.

Gabrielle poked her feet into bedroom slippers. "Is everybody else up? "

"I don't know. I heard voices downstairs."

"Father and mother probably. And maybe Aunt Elle." Gabrielle drew on a yellow robe. "Hope the bath's empty."

For breakfast, Julia drank tomato juice and black coffee. Gabrielle drank the same, but she also ate a plate of scrambled eggs and several strips of bacon.

"How do you do it? " Julia marvelled.

Gabrielle chuckled, "I hate to brag——"

"I know, I know. You never have a hangover no matter how much or what you drink. You make me tired."

"Oh, I only had two Martinis. Liquor's not good for the voice, Julia."

Wearing a bath-robe and slippers, Jimmy slouched into the kitchen. He looked decidedly the worse for wear. He raised his hand in a half-salute. "Hi."

"Such spirit!" exclaimed Gabrielle.

Jimmy groaned at the sight of her bacon and eggs. "Take it away."

"Bear up. Look the other way. I'm hungry."

"Where's Anna?" Jimmy asked.

"Ma gave her the day off," Julia explained. "What will you have? Tomato juice? Coffee?"

"Yeah, a gallon of each."

He sprawled into a chair and reached for the glass of tomato juice Julia set before him. "Neither of you look like the morning after the night before," he commented. "Why do I have to feel like the wrath of God? What gives you women such stamina?"

They clucked at him mockingly.

Mary trudged into the room. "Well!" she said. "It's about time you all got up."

"Oh, ma!" groaned Jimmy.

Mary eyed the empty plates before Jimmy and Julia. "I don't hold with this all-night drinking and all-day sleeping."

"Ma, please!" entreated Gabrielle. "We don't feel like being lectured."

"You deserve it."

"Maybe," Jimmy conceded, "but we don't like it."

"Run along, ma," Gabrielle coaxed. "We'll clean up the kitchen and do the dishes."

Mary departed grumblingly.

"Where are the other kids?" Jimmy called after her.

"Skating."

"Larry must have spent a quiet evening," Gabrielle concluded.

As the afternoon wore on, Julia caught herself waiting for the telephone to ring. There were several calls for Jimmy, one for Gabrielle from Rufus; and at four, Sue's voice answered Julia's "hello."

Julia was tempted to tell Sue to hang up, as she rattled unwittingly from one triviality to another. Finally Julia could stand it no longer. She interrupted Sue with, "Would you mind calling later? I'm expecting—an important call."

Good-naturedly Sue hung up. Julia had hardly clicked the receiver when the 'phone rang again. She answered it breathlessly.

"Hello," said Jeffry Lane.

"Oh, hello." Julia suppressed the eagerness that flashed through her at the sound of his voice.

"You sound livelier than I feel. Are you busy this evening?"

"No—no, not at all."

"How would you like to go skating?"

"Skating?" Julia laughed. "Why, I haven't skated in years."

"I'll hold you up. Come on, it will scatter the hangover blues."

That evening, Gabrielle laid aside her book to smile at Julia's new young man. Her eyes lifted to red hair, to eyes like summer rain. She saw the crook to his mouth, the length of his body. Her own smile twisted.

"I'm Gabrielle," she said. "Julia's sister."

He sat down in the chair she indicated. "Gabrielle," he repeated. "I like the name."

Gabrielle's colour rose. "You're Jeffry, aren't you?"

"Jeffry Lane."

"Jeffry Lane!" she thought. "Jeffry Lane!"

"Julia will be right down." She laughed a little. "She had a hard time finding her skates."

They heard footsteps. Jeffry Lane stood up quickly. Gabrielle could not miss the radiance in their faces when he and Julia met. Their quietness, their sudden rush of laughter.

"I haven't a snow-suit," Julia said, "so I borrowed Jimmy's leather jacket and Larry's cap and mittens. The skirt and shoes are my own."

"Who are Larry and Jimmy?" Jeffry inquired.

"Our brothers," Gabrielle replied.

"Oh!" exclaimed Julia. "Have you two met? I told Gabrielle you were coming, but——"

"We introduced ourselves," Jeffry said. He looked over Julia's outfit dubiously. "Are you sure you'll be warm enough?"

"Of course. Shall we go?"

"Let me take your skates."

At the door, Jeffry turned. "Good-bye, Gabrielle."

"Good-bye," said Gabrielle.

She heard the door close behind them. Mentally she followed them to the gate. She could even hear it click as Jeffry pulled it shut. Slowly she walked to the piano, touched the keys with aimless fingers.

In restlessness, she wandered to the windows that faced the street. She drew aside the curtains and leaned her head against the pane. The snow had piled upon the lawn, drifted against the fence.

"Not like this!" she thought. "Oh, not like this!"

But it was like that.

PART THREE

31

MONDAY evening, Jimmy accosted Julia about the proposed restaurant. They went to the library to discuss the matter in private.

"I'm serious," Jimmy announced. "I'm sick and tired of office work. And I think this is opportunity with a capital O."

"I think so, too," Julia agreed. She pulled pencil and paper from the desk. "Where shall we begin?"

"First we'd better settle what it's going to be—restaurant, tea-room, hamburger joint——"

"I favour the tea-room."

"It will cost us twice as much."

"That's the hitch. Where are we going to get the money in the first place?"

"I had quite a chat with Pat O'Day of Steiger's. He said if we wanted to begin on a small scale, six thousand would do it."

"Six thousand! Why, Jimmy, we're licked before we start."

"You might be. I'm not. We can always borrow. Ever hear of Rufus Drake? You know, of the Drake Candy Company?"

"Don't be funny. I wouldn't want to owe him a penny. Besides, he couldn't afford to take that much money out of his business."

"Oh, couldn't he? I don't think you have any idea of Rufus' financial standing. As for being in his debt, my fair one, don't think that a little false pride is going to stand in my way."

Julia drew squares and circles on her paper. "Well, the thing is to borrow somewhere," she admitted. She wrote "Six thousand dollars" on a clean sheet of paper. "Tea-room?" she asked.

"Might as well go whole hog or none."

"We have everything to learn," Julia pointed out. "Which of us knows the first thing about the restaurant business?"

"There's the library," Jimmy reminded her. "There's Pat O'Day. Surely you can scrape up an acquaintance with someone who runs or owns a lunch-room. After all, you did plenty of research for your school, didn't you? A year of it."

They discussed location, but ruled against getting close to the loop.

The overhead would be too high. They decided to aim at office workers for lunch and the after-theatre crowds for supper.

"We can't be too high hat," Jimmy observed. "We ought to graduate our prices. Not too high and not too low."

About midnight, James came into the library and found them still deep in their plans. They showed him their outline. "So it's begun," he commented, running through the scribbled notes.

They admitted that they had not yet thought of a name for the new project. James dismissed the name as premature and suggested that either or both of them should get jobs waiting on tables for a few weeks. This would give them some idea of what they would be up against.

Julia protested at first, then a thought occurred to her. "It wouldn't be so bad hostessing," she said.

"But those jobs don't grow on trees," James cautioned her.

"No——" Julia's eyes gleamed. "But I've got an idea——"

"What?" demanded Jimmy.

"Never mind," Julia said. "I'll tell you when the time comes."

"Okay, okay," said Jimmy. He turned to his father. "We'll look around for a suitable place, get everything lined up and then go after the mazuma."

"The money is an important angle. Who's going to loan you the money?"

"Well," chuckled Jimmy, "we haven't decided who is going to get the break."

"Well, what kind of an interior have you thought of?" asked James.

"I want colonial," Julia replied. "But Jimmy thinks we'd better go easy."

"I agree with Jimmy. I wouldn't be so high and mighty at the start. Go at it gradually."

"You bet," declared Jimmy. "Better start out with a two-bit lunch counter and make money, than to stand knee deep in atmosphere and lose our shirts."

"We can do this on a small scale if you like, but it has to be nice—and different," argued Julia firmly.

"Fair enough," said James. "You'll have to figure your percentages closely—so much for food, so much for rent, for help, and all the rest of it. It can't be done in a day." He eyed Julia thoughtfully. "What about your school? You can't do two jobs."

"This is bigger than the school. As soon as the restaurant gets

started, I can finish my courses and discontinue the school."

James listened to this in silence. It was completely characteristic of Julia to discard the smaller thing for the larger. He had come to like the thought of Julia's school—of the young girls imbibing culture and manners under the portraits of his forefathers. It seemed a good use for the house. But now Julia would follow this new will-o'-the-wisp and with Jimmy she would undoubtedly make it a success. He could count on the strength of Julia's purpose, even if Jimmy's interest flagged.

Julia had never believed that she and Jimmy could find a common meeting-ground, but their ideas seemed to flow along parallel lines where the restaurant was concerned. Their practical minds encompassed all the technical problems with rapid comprehension.

As a whole the family swung into the excitement. Only Mary would have no part in the restaurant plans. She lived in mortal fear that her children would give up sound paying positions for a dubious venture—and the damning part of it in Mary's estimation—based of a necessity on a large loan.

32

GABRIELLE hung her hat and coat in the music-room closet. She crossed to the piano to await Paul Dumas' coming. He would be a little late, Sadie had informed her upon her arrival. She played snatches of Grieg's *Humoresken* and *Waldwanderung*.

She sang when she played *Dove sono* from *Le Nozze Di Figaro*. Only when her voice and her fingers had finished the song did she realize that Dumas was standing just inside the door.

Gabrielle rose, smiling. "Good evening——"

Dumas hurried to her side. "Will you sing that again, Gabrielle?"

Her surprise showed on her face. "Of course," she said.

While Dumas played a superb accompaniment, she sang the *Contessa's* song. Sang it with its full sweep of sorrowing emotion. Then he asked her to do *Casta Diva* and as soon as she could catch her breath, *Caro nome*. For the first time she moved her teacher with her deep expressive power.

He had no need of other songs from her. He had reached his decision. "Gabrielle, I'd like to arrange a recital for you. For the

middle of February. After that, you must take your year abroad."

He watched her face pale; then saw a darkening pink stain spread to the black curling hair.

"Now I know," she said, "why you wanted me to wait."

He did not probe her statement. He was content to let this new Gabrielle make her own way.

When she reached home, she sought her father. He was in the kitchen, making a sandwich. "Like one?" he asked.

"No, thanks. I don't feel like eating."

James slapped a slice of bread over a spread of peanut butter and grape jelly. Then he saw Gabrielle's face and promptly forgot his sandwich. "What is it, Gabrielle? Have you something to tell me?"

She nodded. "Mr. Dumas is arranging a recital for me. For the fifteenth of February. Then he says I should go abroad."

James reached absently for the percolator and poured coffee into his cup. "I'm not surprised, my dear. I'm just happy for you."

Gabrielle pressed his arm with appreciative fingers. "The year abroad may have to wait, father."

"For money? Borrow it. Don't let anything stop you now."

"Money is one reason. But there's another. Please don't ask me what."

"I still say don't let anything stop you."

"Perhaps I shall feel that way, too, after a while." She smiled at him. "Give me time."

Their silence drifted over cooling coffee and a neglected sandwich. She asked at last, "Why are you looking at me so strangely, father?"

James started. "I was seeing you as all the heroines of the operas. Your audiences will love you, Gabrielle."

Gabrielle's prospective recital curtailed her time with Rufus more than usual. Dumas had made a list of the songs she was to sing, and Gabrielle practised them faithfully from day to day. There was a sharp focus now to everything that she did.

Whenever she and Rufus did go anywhere together—to a movie, skating, dancing,—they discovered that their relationship had undergone a subtle change. Gabrielle recognized it at once. Rufus, cognizant of all her moods, only sensed it. He noticed, too, the new and thrilling timbre to her voice and wondered humbly if he were the cause.

To Gabrielle it did not seem strange that in her awakened state she should be physically more aware of Rufus. As this awakening predicted the fulfilment of her voice, so did it foretell the fulfilment of her

body. For the first time she was completely sentient and acutely conscious of the lack that had impeded her before. "This is why I was born," she told herself with new insight. "To feel."

On Sunday afternoon, Rufus called to take her to a Symphony concert. He found her alone in the living-room. She was singing *Dormi, dormi, bel bambino*. She smiled at him and continued her song.

Her voice enthralled him to the last lyrical note. For a moment after she had finished singing, he sat silent, savouring the delight of her voice and the obviously ripening loveliness of its owner. Then he joined her on the piano stool.

"Gabrielle," Rufus said, "I'm in love with you. I won't be silent any longer. I don't want to be without you another hour."

Gabrielle's fingers dropped from the music. "Rufus——" She wanted to stop him, to save him hurt before he spoke. Yet how could she deny him the right to speak when she had been expecting this moment, dreading it—yes, and inviting it for all the years she had known him?

She said, "Please, Rufus, don't offer me a gift I must refuse."

His face whitened. "I didn't expect refusal, Gabrielle."

She laid a hand on his sleeve. His glance rested on it. A slender, quiet hand, the fingers tipped with rose. His own hand closed over it.

Tears filled her eyes. "I always hoped it would be you—some day. I don't know that I believed it would be. I'm fond of you. Terribly fond of you. That's why I've been unfair to you——"

"You've never been unfair to me, my darling. I've known exactly where I stood with you all along. It's not your fault I was glad to accept that standing. But lately, you've been—well, different. That's why I decided it was time to speak."

"I'm sorry, Rufus."

He smiled wryly. "It can't be helped. One doesn't love or not love for a word."

She leaned her head against his shoulder. "Rufus, Rufus," she sobbed, "why do we have to get so mixed up?"

"Gabrielle——" His arms went around her. "It's queer," he said presently, "even with you here in my arms and not belonging here, I'm not mixed up. I used to be. Plenty. But not any more. I'm steering a straight course, Gabrielle. I know what I want and what I don't want. No substitutes. No by-roads."

She was glad of the circle his arms made about her. Its warm circumference gave her a moment of peace. "I wish I loved you, Rufus," she sighed.

He looked deep into her dark, troubled eyes. "You might think about it."

She shook her head. "No, Rufus. You see, I know what I want, too. I've only known for a little while, but I'm no less positive for the shortness of time."

"So that's it." His gaze held hers. "Then why are you mixed up?"

"Because, Rufus, there's not the slightest chance of my getting what I want. If there had been, I'd have told you before this."

His arms released her. His hands gripped her shoulders. "Forgive me if that's good news to me. Then why cling to a lost cause? Isn't that rather silly?"

"I couldn't marry you—loving someone else."

He winced. "Ghost love isn't what it's cracked up to be."

"You said no substitutes," she reminded him.

"My dear, you're the original. Hush," he said as she opened her lips to protest. "With a woman, it's so different. It's a long, lonesome road, Gabrielle, when you go it alone. Even with a career, it's lonely." He bent down and kissed her quietly. "Think it over."

He stood up and drew her to her feet. "Shall we leave now? Otherwise we'll be late for the concert."

Next day Gabrielle, troubled and harried, sought the sanctuary of Paul Dumas' music-room. The yellow chairs, newly covered, the soft tones of the turquoise draperies, welcomed and eased her.

"Not working to-day?" Dumas asked.

"No, I took the day off." She jumped up and walked to the windows. "Mr. Dumas, Rufus wants to marry me."

She could not see his smile. "Of course, Gabrielle."

She faced him sharply. "Of course!" she echoed, and repeated dully, "Of course. In a way I've always known it, but we had gone along for ages on such flexible terms that I've acted like an ostrich."

"Are you in love with someone else, my dear?"

"How did you know?"

Dumas' eyebrows lifted. "Observation."

She hesitated slightly. Then she said drearily, "But he's not in love with me. He's in love with Julia."

Dumas walked over to stand beside her. His hand dragged at the window drapery. "And Julia?"

"She loves him. You have only to look at them together to know."

Dumas returned to his chair. "Well, Gabrielle?"

She flushed. "You think I'm being futile——"

"You know it."

"I've never been in love before. Not like this."

"Can you build your life on the love of a man for another woman?"

"No, on my love for him."

"An empty shell."

Gabrielle covered her face with her hands. The silence was deep, immeasurable. Her lifted face betrayed a defeat and a victory. "I knew it all along," she said.

Dumas did not sympathize with her, but in the days that followed he traced the depth of her emotional experience in the new power and freedom of her voice. If he caught himself wishing her first love might have been a happier affair, he reminded himself that Gabrielle was strong enough to work out her own destiny.

As Rufus had hoped she would, Gabrielle turned unconsciously to him for support when she set herself to forget her love for Jeffry Lane. His love had a healing quality that in its constant protection quieted the tumult within her. She found, nevertheless, that if her love for Jeffry became more still, it did not diminish in depth or breadth. When she did not see him, although not content, she was less swayed and torn by emotion. For his voice, his smile, could turn her strength to helplessness. For the third time in the history of the Livingstons, a Julia and a Gabrielle loved the same man.

33

THE days that trudged over Gabrielle's heart were magic ones for Julia. For the first time in her life, she had come to the sweeping acquaintance with love. Skating beside her that first evening, Jeffry Lane had said, "Don't look now. But I'm in love with you, Julia."

She stumbled and he caught her in his arms. "I love you," he whispered and kissed her.

The night closed in on them and bound in wind and darkness her answer: "I'm glad. I don't think I could have stood it if you hadn't told me so quickly."

Over cups of hot chocolate in a small restaurant on Spring Avenue, Jeffry gave her a sketchy history of himself. It was a new and thrilling experience for Julia to be listening to a man with real interest in what he did or said.

"I'm an orphan," he related. "My father died when I was ten. My mother had a hard time until I got out of school and found myself a job. After that it was a little better. She was a pretty swell gal—my mother. She died in nineteen thirty-four. Since her death I've boarded and roomed with a Swedish couple. They're the best there are, let me tell you. You'd think they were my parents, the way they fuss over me."

Julia's heart murmured, "Why wouldn't they? They must love you as I do."

He told her casually, "As for jobs—well, I've had all kinds. Right now, I'm a shipping clerk for the Master Welders. It's a pretty good job; at least, the pay's better than average."

Julia did not allow her disappointment in his job to show in her face or in her manner. She thought, "It doesn't matter—really. For me, he'll do better." Never before had Julia permitted herself a compromise of this sort. But her lovely seeking eyes were fastened on Jeffry in full devotion.

"And that," said Jeffry, "is about all there is to know about me. Except that I'm mad about you. Utterly. Completely."

Julia gave herself up to the enjoyment of the moment. Here was something no one could take from her.

Yet greater than her love for Jeffry, Julia's ambition was reaching new heights in her preliminary work with Jimmy on the tea-room. Her moderate success with her lectures was but a breath compared to the expectation she nursed for this proposed venture. The School of Individuality could go the way of her job at the University, of her afternoons at Miss Crawford's. They were all stepping-stones in the one direction. Julia never lingered in the past. She had no regrets over what was done. Gabrielle lived in two worlds, treading the rounds of everyday necessities, but steeped in the romantic nostalgia of music. But Julia had little patience with the divergence of energies or purposes. Hers was a realistic way, but now—and she hugged the knowledge close to her—it was brushed with undeniable enchantment by the love of Jeffry Lane.

To the hour, Julia remembered when she first discovered that Gabrielle was in love with Jeffry. She and Jeffry, Gabrielle and Rufus, Jimmy and Larry were collecting their skates from the bench in the front hall, preparatory to a walk to Roswell Park, when Gabrielle stooped to tie the laces of her snow-boots.

Jeffry was nearest her. "I'll fix that, Gabrielle," he volunteered.

As Gabrielle raised her head above Jeffry's bent body, Julia saw her

face. It was a flushed, unhappy face, the mouth rigid in control. Julia could scarcely believe her eyes. Yet even as she turned away from them, she felt a surge of exultation. For the first time, she transcended fear of Gabrielle. She had what Gabrielle wanted. At last her sister was torn from the cloister that Kit and Rufus had made for her. There was only one way to interpret the look on her face, and Julia did it rightly.

In a flash she thought of the second Julia and Gabrielle, and the fourth Julia and Gabrielle. It was the same story all over again. Each time their loves had crossed and tangled. In her heart Julia knew that Gabrielle's love for Jeffry was fruitless. This was once where her talent, her soft beauty, her gentle spirit would not help her. It was she, Julia, who Jeffry loved, with an intensity startling even to her. She did not stop to consider that Jeffry was a poor catch, a man of small ambition and limited capacity. He was hers. The knowledge that Gabrielle loved him, too, gave him added value in her eyes. All her life she had been playing second fiddle to Gabrielle. Now her turn had come. The moment was sweet to Julia as she skated across the lake.

But not to Rufus, who also had seen Gabrielle's face; his heart had echoed her despair. "So that's the way it is," he thought. All through the afternoon, brilliantly clear and cold, Rufus reviewed the curious muddle that circled them.

Gabrielle skated up to him as he swerved toward the warming house. "What's the matter, Rufus? You're so quiet. Don't you feel all right?"

"No," lied Rufus. "I have a headache."

"Oh, I'm sorry. How about finding a drug-store and getting a bromo seltzer?"

"On the way home," Rufus compromised. "In the meantime, I'll race you around the lake."

Gabrielle was an excellent skater. She matched Rufus' terrific speed. They passed Jeffry and Julia, who were touring the pond in a dilatory fashion.

"Poor Julia," Gabrielle said when she regained her normal breathing after they reached a tie finish. "She's going to be an outdoor girl with a vengeance if she marries Jeffry."

Rufus stared at her. "Are you so sure they'll be married?"

Gabrielle's eyes widened. "But of course. They're in love."

Rufus cut a figure eight and swung into slow rhythm beside her. "What then, Gabrielle?" he asked, all his love for her welling up in him as he stared down at her slim figure.

Gabrielle shot him a quick, startled glance. Then for a moment she skated in silence, her eyes on Jeffry's brief blue cap far down the lagoon.

"I don't know, Rufus. I don't know."

34

GABRIELLE came into the dining-room, her face kindled to warmth. "Kit's home!" she cried. "Kit's home!"

"Finally!" cheered Elle.

A hush enveloped the room until Jeffry broke the silence uncertainly with "Who's Kit?"

"An old love of Gabrielle's," said Julia malevolently.

"Julia's absurd," James said. "Kit's an old friend of the family."

"And an old love of mine instead of Gabrielle's," added Elle.

"Is he coming here?" asked Rene.

"To-morrow night, if he can make it," Gabrielle replied. But her joy at his coming had dimmed. Elle was waiting.

During the evening, Sue and Jerald made a happy entrance. The young Hales beamed over everybody until Jimmy demanded, "What are you two so disgustingly sunshiny about?" Everyone was basking in Sunday evening leisure in the living-room.

"An anniversary," guessed Larry.

The Hales shook their heads.

James slapped his knee. "I'll bet I've got it! A baby—Sue's going to have a baby!"

"James!" cried Mary.

Sue and Jerald were astonished that anyone expected them to be embarrassed. Indeed, Jerald's unmistakable pride provoked a shout of laughter.

"When?" asked Gabrielle.

"August," Sue answered.

Jimmy reached from his chair to his father's to shake James' hand.

"How yuh doin', Grandpap?"

Elle thought angrily, "Why do people have children? It makes one feel so old."

Kit arrived for a hurried visit the following evening. Watching him greet Elle, Gabrielle could not discern whether he was pleasantly

surprised to see her or simply surprised. His greeting held little more than a cool courtesy. He hugged Gabrielle affectionately and shook hands with everyone else. "It seems like I've been gone a year," he said.

"It seemed so to us, too," Gabrielle told him.

He could stay only a half-hour. "I've appointments from here till Christmas."

They told him about Sue, and he nodded laughingly. "She came to see me to-day. Lord, it seems funny—one of you kids raising a family."

"How is she?" asked Mary.

"Extremely fit. Nauseated now, of course, but that will pass."

When he left, Elle accompanied him to the door. But it was Gabrielle who filled his thoughts all the way to the office. He had sensed the change in her, and in the morning he stole an hour from his patients to visit Paul Dumas. Their friendship bridged Kit's haste.

"I'll tell you about my trip some other time, Paul. I've come about Gabrielle again. How is she?"

"Her voice or herself?"

"Both. She seemed another girl when I saw her last night."

"She is." Dumas explained about the recital and the trip abroad.

Kit digested his story and its implications. "So she's reached it at last," he said, in a shrugging acceptance of the inevitable.

Dumas nodded. "And with it, voice fulfilment of the richest sort. Just what I hoped would happen with her."

"But she's come to it unhappily?"

"For a little while, Christopher. But don't worry about her. She's not bred of pioneer stock for nothing."

"I wish I had your faith!"

Whenever he saw Gabrielle, Kit watched her closely. By an intricate process of withdrawal, he grew more cordial to Elle. When his work resumed normal proportions, he began to take Elle to an occasional movie or dinner-dance. He had no idea that these attentions to her aunt made Gabrielle sick with fear. His own unhappiness was no less intense because he had lived with its uncertainty for years. Over and over he reminded himself, "'Hope springs eternal——'"

He was as conscious of Gabrielle's unhappiness as he was of his own, but not until the Sunday before her recital did he place the responsibility for her love. He had stopped at the Livingstons' to give Gabrielle his best wishes for her introduction to the musical world.

He found her curled up on the love-seat in the living-room. She was staring wide-eyed into space.

"Don't get up," he said. He sat down opposite her, thinking, his eyes and his heart full of her, "What kind of man is this who can see her and not love her? Is he already married? Or in love with someone else?" Aloud he asked, "How's the prima donna?"

Gabrielle laughed nervously. "I have the jitters, Kit. My stomach feels funny. After all these years, at last it's going to happen. The invitations have been sent, an announcement made to the papers. My dress is hanging ready in the wardrobe. Kit, what am I going to do?"

His hand steadied hers as it rested on her knee. "What are you going to do, Gabrielle? You know as well as I. You're going to sing your glorious best."

She laid her free hand over his, a fleeting gesture. "If I do, it will be you who made it possible." She tipped back her head. Sunlight from the windows slanted across her eyes. "Do you remember when you sent me to Paul Dumas?"

The years between seemed shadowy to Gabrielle as she looked at Kit and thought of the hours of practice, of study, of Dumas' steady tutelage, of widening horizons and constant straining after an effect that had come to her now through the stirrings of her own heart.

"As if it were yesterday." Kit's answer came after a long pause. His memory, too, went backward through the years—the slow flowering of Gabrielle's talent, her industry and her quiet acceptance of life as it came to her. "Don't ever think anyone gave you to-morrow but yourself, Gabrielle."

She shook her head, a gently reminiscent denial. "So many people have had a share in it. You. Mr. Dumas. Father. Rufus. And—someone else." Her eyes misted. She brushed away the film of tears. "I guess I'm tired," she said.

Kit said slowly, "Gabrielle, I wanted to talk to you about going abroad. Dumas says you aren't planning on going yet."

"No—not yet."

"If it's because of finances, you're welcome to any and all the help I can give you."

"Kit, please don't be so nice to me. I'll be crying like a fool." She paused a moment, her calmness returning. "Thank you just the same, Kit, but money isn't my only reason. I can't go now—not for a while, anyway."

The front door banged. They heard voices in the hall. Julia's and Jeffry Lane's.

"They're taking off their coats," Gabrielle said in a tight voice.

Kit caught her inflexion, noticed her sudden tension. In an agony of suspense, he waited for Julia and Jeffry to come in. They made a gay entrance, their cheeks bright and cold.

"Happy Valentine's Day," cried Jeffry.

Julia greeted Kit and introduced the two men to each other. Kit missed nothing—not Julia's joyousness, or Jeffry's pride in her. Or the wall that separated them from Gabrielle. He groaned within himself. "It would be a family affair. Can't this damn family do anything but stick together?"

"By the way," Kit said, his eyes on Gabrielle, his understanding willing her composure, "there's a box of candy under my coat in the hall. An ornate heart-shaped box that ought to make the rounds at least once."

"Thanks, Kit," said Gabrielle. "I shall love to look at it. But I can't eat any. Not now."

Julia said, "Jeffry brought me flowers," and pressed her face into the bowl of sweet-peas on the piano. "Hasn't Rufus come across yet?" she asked Gabrielle.

"He isn't coming over until to-night," Gabrielle said. "And then only for a little while. I have to get to bed early."

"Of course, your recital!" Jeffry exclaimed, draping his long body over a Sheraton chair. "Do you realize that I haven't heard you sing?"

Julia stiffened against the piano.

Gabrielle did not look at Jeffry. "Haven't you?" she murmured.

"Won't you sing something?" Jeffry requested. He sprang up and walked to the piano. "Come on, I'll play for you."

"I didn't know you played," Julia said slowly.

His smile was wholeheartedly hers. "Nothing to brag about. Come on, Gabrielle."

"No, please," Gabrielle entreated. "You can hear me to-morrow."

"I don't want to be overwhelmed." He played the opening bars of *Vedrai carino*.

Gabrielle slid into a sitting posture. "You know *Don Giovanni*?" she cried delightedly.

"Sure." It was a careless acknowledgment. "I studied piano for years. Opera as a hobby."

Gabrielle recognized his limitations even as he played, but his interest in music pleased her. She stood by the piano to sing *Zerlina's* caressing song. She sang it sweetly, alluringly. Kit and Jeffry were

charmed; Julia apprehensive. She brushed aside their praise of Gabrielle.

"You should do something about your playing, Jeffry," she said.

He ran through a scale before he replied. "No, not me. I'm the proverbial jack of all trades, master of none." He struck a desultory note and played softly, absently. "I'm an average shipping clerk, a fair skater; I ski with moderate success. I'm a fair talker, a mediocre musician." He shrugged, and the music dropped into silence. "I have no special talent or ability. I'm just Jeffry Lane, American citizen." He laughed, his mouth a crook of humour. "But I like it."

Julia's eyelids hid her eyes. She felt physically ill.

Kit measured him carefully before he said, "If you're satisfied with life, you're a darn lucky man."

Julia sat down before the fireplace. "Play something else, Jeffry."

She didn't want him to play, but she had to think. Through his rendition of the *Moonlight Sonata*, she reached a decision.

Jeffry was not for her. Her love for him could not encompass such a complaisant acceptance of living. She had to give him up.

There was no time to probe or temper her resolve, for Jeffry asked, "Don't you feel all right, Julia?"

She gave no sign of surprise. She smiled at him serenely. "Of course. I'm just a little tired."

From the doorway, Elle, regal in sheer green wool, surveyed them. "Would you care for company?" she inquired.

The men came to their feet.

"Certainly," said Kit.

That night, while Gabrielle tossed beside her in restless sleep, Julia kept company with the fire. She would give Jeffry up, she told herself, knowing that ultimately she would do just that. But so bitter was her need of him that she clung to the respite her heart demanded: "Not yet! Not yet!"

She knew beyond doubt that she would be giving him up to Gabrielle. Her comfort would be there to meet Jeffry's disillusionment. To Julia the result seemed inevitable. Her mouth twisted at the emptiness of such a triumph.

She stared between the maple bedposts at the pewter candle-sticks that graced the mantel. She wondered how many others before her had sat against the pillows and gazed in bleak despair at settee and chair and wavering fire. Then she remembered that her Aunt Julia had loved Christopher Roberts and had given him up to her sister, Gabrielle.

Julia smiled in kindred pity. She asked herself, "Is it worse to give up a love you never had or one that is surely yours?"

She went to sleep to the clamour of her heart: "Not yet! Not yet!"

35

GABRIELLE was in a state of high tension on the day of her recital. Nothing in her experience had prepared her for the ordeal of sustaining a programme alone. She had not even appeared in her school operetta.

As the hours flew past, she tried to relax, to empty her mind of all thought of the evening. She made careful preparations, stretching out the time of dressing, working endlessly over her hair. But she was shaking when she approached Dumas. She thought, "I can't sing. My throat is tight. Parched. I'm scared."

Dumas saw the fright in her face. He took her hands and pressed the trembling fingers. "Gabrielle," he said sternly, "this is no time for fear. This is a test that you must meet. Steady now. You have magnificent voice. You know what to do with it. Don't you see that there is nothing for you but success?"

She lifted her head, her dark curls faintly escaping their smart coiffure. She grew quiet; warmth crept into her hands. "I'm not afraid," she told him. "I'm not afraid."

She preceded him into the music-room. A slender figure in a yellow gown, the soft taffeta swishing as she walked; the colour of the violets on her shoulder climbing to her eyes.

Rufus had sent her the violets. Rufus, who loved her. Jeffry had sent roses to Julia. He was with Julia now. While Rufus was apart from them. Watching Gabrielle, drenched in her voice as a garden is drenched in spring rain. He could think of nothing else.

Rufus pivoted the select company—the Livingstons, Jeffry, Elle, Kit, critics from the Riverside newspapers; two music critics from the Twin Cities; a representative of the country's leading opera company who was both an admirer of Paul Dumas' technique and his personal friend. The music schools and societies of Riverside were represented. So was the Riverside Symphony orchestra. A discriminating company, Dumas decided with satisfaction.

As Gabrielle stood beside him at the piano, Dumas thought, "She's such a child. Such a lovely child." For a moment he felt sorry for her, seeing her tremble. Then he reflected that there was no age for the artist. He tried to steady her with his own tranquillity. He thought, his fingers accompanying her with delicate precision, "She's good. Miraculously good. Thank God for that!"

From her opening selection of Stephen Foster melodies, through Haydn's *My mother bids me bind my hair* and Mozart's *Violet*, Gabrielle took hold of her audience. Here was enchantment; here were joy and tenderness; here was faultless execution.

Rufus caught a whisper behind him; "My God, if she couldn't sing a note, she'd still be good to look at."

"Yeah," came a weary mutter, "she'll probably end up as the voice behind the cartoon or going into ecstasies over Ixnay Garbage Cans."

But comment died to Brahms' *Cradle Song*, remained in silence through *Rejoice Greatly* from Handel's *Messiah* and Schubert's *Ave Maria* and ended in applause that stormed colour into Gabrielle's voice.

"My mistake," murmured the dreary voice. "She'd look wonderful in a choir robe."

Rufus thought, "You'd look good with my hands around your throat."

His annoyance vanished before Gabrielle's voice. She sang *Non mi dir*, telling her own heart into its enduring fidelity. Into *Porgi, amor* went, in deepest measure, her grief; it was her own bewailing.

Yet her voice climbed in magnitude and interpretation in *Dove sono* and reached its greatest triumph in the impassioned *Caro nome*. She closed with *Auld Lang Syne*, and her audience stood up to applaud her.

With the conventional gesture she held out her hand to Paul Dumas. Dumas bowed with her to the enthusiastic crowd. Gabrielle could see nothing but a mist of faces. She was moved beyond anything in her previous experience.

Jeffrey had listened, first with incredulity, then with admiration. For a brief space, he had forgotten Julia. "Gabrielle, you didn't prepare me enough for this," he told her.

As Gabrielle looked at him with slow delight, she hoped she would not cry. In relief, she welcomed Rufus and her father. They brought her back to normality. Rufus said nothing. He clasped her hand and waited beside her. James was visibly proud. "My dear, words fail me," he said.

Julia moved up to her. "The yellow and violet were good, Gabrielle." She caught Jeffry's arm and drew him away from the circle surrounding her sister. She had seen and appraised his spontaneous response to Gabrielle's performance. To Julia, Gabrielle the singer and Gabrielle the woman were one.

Jimmy winked at Gabrielle. "Great stuff, kid! I didn't understand half of it, but it sure sounded high-class."

36

GABRIELLE did not see the newspapers until she came home from work next day. Jimmy had piled them on her chair in the dining-room. He had folded back the pages to the Music Notes.

"How are they?" Gabrielle asked.

"Rotten," grinned Jimmy.

"Not bad," conceded Julia.

James suggested, "Why not read them?"

"Not before dinner," protested Mary. "Everything's going to get cold."

"I'll just skim through them," Gabrielle said.

Her fingers trembled over the pages. Phrases caught her eye: "A young and gifted artist." "Miss Livingston's promise is greater than her present." "Miss Livingston is evidently pointing to opera. She could do *Donna Anna*, *Fidelio*, the *Contessa* with subtlety and grace, but we doubt if she has the makings of a Wagnerian heroine. She has appeal and genuine emotion, but she lacks the necessary fire and passion for an *Isolde* or *Elizabeth*." "A superlative voice reminiscent of Lilli Lehmann's."

"You hit the bull's eye all right," Jimmy said, piling scalloped potatoes on his plate.

Elle broke a slice of bread. "Evidently you still have work to do. Promise is a long way from success. It will take time and money to bridge the gap."

"Let's not go into that," said Gabrielle. "I'm so thankful just to have cut any ice at all. To have got such decent reviews. It was so much better than anything I'd expected."

"Well, don't let it go to your head," Jimmy warned her.

"I wish we were all as balanced as Gabrielle," James put in.

"She looked lovely, anyway," Mary contributed.

"Thank you, ma," said Gabrielle.

Dumas paid her a short visit that evening and the family left them alone in the library. Gabrielle sat on the edge of the sofa, apprehensive for the one opinion that meant most to her musically. "Well, Mr. Dumas?" Her voice was hesitant.

Dumas settled himself comfortably in the old leather chair. "You were first-rate, Gabrielle. Really first-rate. I feel proud of you."

She relaxed slightly. "You saw the papers?"

"Every one. The press opinions are important to your future; but they are not necessarily sound appraisals. It depends on the critic. A few know their music as well as they do their journalistic technique. But not many. One must take that into account."

"They didn't seem to think I had reached any particular heights."

"Not any particular dramatic heights," he amended. "Emotionally you've gone a long way. But there are many things you must learn. You have yet to sing with an orchestra. There's a world of difference between that and piano accompaniment. You must also learn about the stage as you have learned your languages."

Gabrielle pushed back her hair from her forehead. She was unbelievably tired.

"Mr. Sagalli and I had a long talk about your future," Dumas continued. "He agrees with me that a year under Dallini would be best for you. If you put yourself across in Italy, in Paris, in London, then you can do it at home. If you went directly to New York, you'd get small parts, and no more, for a long time. There are too many young and gifted artists waiting their turn there. So you must lay your groundwork firmly and intelligently, Gabrielle."

She stared at the toe of her slipper. "I want to go to Dallini. But not just yet."

Dumas looked at her sharply. "You should go at once. If it's money you need, I'll be glad to loan it to you. And as for Christópher—he'd jump at the chance."

Gabrielle felt like a parrot as she reiterated, "It isn't the money, although I do need that. I hate to borrow, but when I go, I'll come to you—or Kit."

"It's only common sense, for in two years you'll be making many times the amount you'll have to borrow."

She nodded. "I know. That's the only reason I'd consider it. But I must ask you to let me wait a little while. I can't go just yet."

Dumas searched her troubled eyes. "It is courage you need?"

"Courage," she said in a low voice, "and harmony. Stability, if you will. A little while ago I would have jumped at the chance to go abroad. But now I am uncertain and full of fears. Things have been happening to me lately—things that have made me unsure."

"Things that have wakened you up, but that shouldn't make you feel unsure. Either you forge ahead at this point or you decline. Your recital is over. It was quite a success. That is a definite step. Now you must not stand still. Don't let your heart control your head. Let it give you poise and warmth and more ambition. One must be a little ruthless in getting ahead. One must move with purpose and decision."

Dumas tried to pour strength into her, but he noticed that she was exhausted and he gave up further urging. "I think you're too tired to hear any more. I'll leave you now. You had better get some rest."

She accompanied him to the front door. "We'll continue my lessons as usual?" she asked.

"I think that would be wise."

After he had gone, Gabrielle sank into a state of absolute discouragement. All the elation she had gained from her recital had passed, and she felt a dreary failure. More and more she realized that she was moving too feebly along the course mapped out for her by Dumas, and that she was disappointing him by her vacillation. She knew with certainty that she should be making plans to go abroad, but the thought of Jeffry stayed her, held her fast to her decision to wait.

At the end of the week, Elle gathered her belongings together and left for Chicago. She was gay at her leave-taking, and to the astonishment of the Livingstons, Kit took her to the train. Her parting words were for Gabrielle.

"Take my advice and forget the voice business. If I were you, I'd hang on to Rufus. He's a sound fellow."

"Meow, meow!" mocked Larry as the door closed behind her, and the family scattered from the hall.

Gabrielle took *Faint Perfume* to the library and curled up on the sofa to read. She had turned the first page when her father strolled into the room, carrying a copy of *Esquire*.

"The reading club," he observed.

But Gabrielle did not feel like reading. The book slid to her lap. Her dreams peopled space.

Over the pages of his magazine, James stared at his daughter curiously. "You're in love with him, aren't you, my dear?"

Gabrielle's fingers fumbled for her book. "Oh, father, do I conceal it so badly?"

"I'm afraid so." He shrugged his shoulders. "He isn't worth it, Gabrielle. Not all this despair and shattered feeling."

She turned on him sharply, a flame scorching her cheeks, spurning in her eyes. "He's worth everything I've got."

James sighed. "I always hoped you'd be less intense than the others. I rather thought you'd take living in your stride——"

"But this is love, father!"

"And what is love? Here to-day, gone to-morrow. Transient. It's just a part of living. Not nearly the most important part."

Gabrielle stared at him unbelievably. "Haven't you ever been in love, father? Surely——" She flushed.

"You mean with your mother, don't you? Of course I was. When we were both very young. She had a good figure, a pretty face, soft hair." There was a placid acceptance of that appeal in his voice, in the remembrance his eyes held.

"Then it wasn't *something*——"

He gave her a strange, tolerant smile. "At the time, I thought it was everything. I don't think I need to tell you how much less than that it was. It neither consumed nor held me. Nothing has ever done that to me. My family holds my interest and, to a varying degree, my affections. You, more than any of them, have been close to me."

"Don't! Oh, don't! I thought you—of all people—would know how I felt."

James laid aside the magazine. He pulled out his pipe and reached for his tobacco-pouch. "That's just it, Gabrielle. I do know. That is why I suddenly wish you were older, so that you wouldn't have to learn all this through the raw medium of suffering."

Gabrielle dabbed at her eyes with a handkerchief. "You're so contradictory."

"We all are." James touched a match to his pipe.

Gabrielle got up and walked aimlessly over to the windows. "I wish spring would come."

"And summer? And another winter?"

She dropped the curtain into place and leaned against the old red bricks of the fireplace. "Warm," she thought with a faint touch of comfort. Her eyes brushed the portraits above the bookcases, travelled from picture to picture. "I wonder," she said aloud, "if any of them had such difficulties."

James blew smoke in floating rings. "Everyone thinks his troubles

greater than anyone else's. It takes a lot of good sense to preserve the balance."

Seeing Gabrielle's tormented face, he came to a resigned conclusion, "Parents are no better than their children. Why should I expect her to accept my platitudes? She'll do as I did—love if she wishes, brood if she wishes, forget if she can." He sighed, "I hope she wakes up before she poisons her career or loses it."

37

GABRIELLE worked hard to regain her peace of mind. She, too, recognized the dangers of the trend of her emotionalism. Into days already filled to overflowing with voice lessons, attendant studies, and her daily job, she crammed a symphony with Rufus, movies, occasionally a play.

At the end of March she and Rufus heard Lawrence Tibbet sing with the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra under the direction of the guest conductor, José Iturbi. They saw *Maytime* at the Commodore. They danced at Steiger's, the Queen Anne Lounge, the Hammond Café. They roller-skated at the Arena. In early May they drove to Stillwater and lunched at Lowell Inn.

As they travelled in leisurely fashion the return road from Stillwater to Riverside, the evening was etched in moonlight, framed in stars.

"How quiet it is!" Gabrielle said. "How wonderful to be quiet——"

Although he did not look at her, Rufus knew how relaxed she was. As limp and pliable as the body of a rag doll.

"We've had quite a spree these past few months," he said. "Maybe it would be a good idea to spend more leisurely days like this one. Do you like to fish?"

"To fish?" echoed Gabrielle. "It's something I haven't done in years. Father used to take us when we were little. I loved it."

"Okay. Next Sunday we fish," declared Rufus. "To bed with the chickens on Saturday night and up before them on Sunday morning. Is it a bargain?"

"It sounds like fun to me."

Rufus was as good as his word. He took Gabrielle to dinner at the

Automobile Club on Saturday evening, but promptly at nine o'clock he left her at her front door, urging her to turn in at once and get some sleep.

He glanced down at her face, half lost in shadow. "Good night," he said, and kissed her casually, as if she were not an ache in his heart.

The alarm woke Gabrielle from boggy dreams. She opened her eyes and groaned. Two a.m. Why had she made such an absurd arrangement? She looked enviously at Julia who still slept in fine disregard of the whirring alarm.

The morning was dark, its stillness unfriendly beyond the windows. Hastily Gabrielle washed and dressed. She donned slacks, a sweater, and crêpe-soled shoes. She tied back her hair with a yellow ribbon. Carrying a leather jacket over her arm, she was tiptoeing along the hall when the door to her parents' room opened. Her father, attired in rumpled pyjamas, peered at her in sleepy astonishment.

"Good heavens, Gabrielle! You aren't eloping like Sue, are you?"

Gabrielle shook her head. "Look again, father. Does my get-up suggest the wedding march?"

"Well—now that I have both eyes open—hardly."

"Rufus and I are going fishing."

"Oh, I see. Have a good time."

James returned to his bed while Gabrielle hurried downstairs to snatch a bite of breakfast. As he punched his pillow into comfortable softness and stretched luxuriously beneath the blankets, James' arm brushed against Mary. The short sleeve of her nightgown had fallen away from her shoulder, exposing limp padded flesh.

James drew away from her and frowned at his instinctive withdrawal. Why was it that after all these years, he could not get used to Mary's warm, heavy body next to his own? Only when he had need of her and fulfilled that desire was he forgetful of her flabby pink curves.

But this morning he turned his back to her. Gabrielle engrossed his thoughts. Where was she heading—with love for Jeffry in her heart and the love of Rufus at her hand? Would her struggle destroy her? Would her emotions dissipate her future, bring to nothing that glorious voice?

And what of Julia? Wasn't she, too, fighting some strange battle of her own?

Yet James, gazing at the slowly lightening window-panes, did not worry about Julia. He knew she could take care of herself. But his heart was sore for Gabrielle.

"It's incredible," he thought, "but Gabrielle still believes in a personal fairy-tale. Unconsciously, it is true, but with no less a faith just the same."

Some two hours later, Rufus, from his seat between the rowlocks, watched Gabrielle thread a worm on a fish-hook. Her businesslike efficiency amused him.

She looked up and caught his smile. "Are you, by any chance, feeling sorry for the worm, Mr. Drake?"

"I never feel sorry for worms, Miss Livingston."

She grinned and with grubby fingers pushed the squirming mass around the bend of the hook.

Rufus said in an odd voice, "We do have fun, don't we, Gabrielle?"

The hook dangled from the line across her knee. "Yes, such a lot."

"Why couldn't it be enough?"

Her face was washed of laughter. "Rufus—this is going to be hard for me to say because I don't want to say it. I'm selfish. I've always been selfish about you. I still want to be. I enjoy you so much. But I won't be. Not any more. I mustn't be. I can't hold you, Rufus. Not indefinitely. Without hope. Until my mind is clear. It isn't fair to you."

His eyes were full of her—of her slender body in its blue slacks and its blue suède jacket with the yellow sweater showing at the throat. He said, "No, Gabrielle, you couldn't hold me indefinitely without hope unless I wanted to be held. Oh, I get tired of waiting. There are lots of times when I call myself all kinds of a fool for hanging on to a thread. The Rufus Drake you never knew wouldn't have waited like this. Not for any girl. He always got what he wanted and when he wanted it. The only thing is, nothing that he got seemed very important. This Rufus Drake is a patient man. Impatience would make no hit with you, would it, Gabrielle?"

"No, Rufus."

"It may seem strange to you," he continued slowly, "because you have so many ties, but I had never actually loved anyone before I met you."

"Oh, surely——"

He shook his head, and the warming sunlight struck across his hair. "Not anyone," he repeated. "My mother is little more than a stranger to me. I'm fond of my father, but there is no real bond between us except our blood. And blood is the least of many chains unless it has other links. But you, Gabrielle——" He paused, and his eyes showed her just what place she held in his heart.

The water slapped against the boat. Gabrielle felt a rocking motion that somehow associated itself with Rufus' words for ever afterward in her memory.

Rufus' voice echoed his thoughts. "Gabrielle, you seem like a part of myself. I suppose you could destroy me—if I allowed you to. But I've learned in the last few years that destruction is a self-made job."

"Rufus—Rufus—I've given you nothing for all your devotion."

"My darling, you've given me more than anyone else has ever given me. You've given me all of yourself that you had to give. I told you before that I understood that all along. That's why I never took anything from you—even your slightest kiss—without gratitude. You've shown me gentleness, perspective. You've also given me a family and a home.

"Oh, don't think I haven't wanted more of you. Right now I want you terribly. But I don't want you to believe you handed me crumbs and I grabbed them. It isn't in you, Gabrielle. And it isn't in me. Can't you see that?"

She was crying quietly. "I've never been happier or unhappier than I am at this moment."

"I want your happiness. I won't be hypocritical and say—entirely. God! I could strangle Jeffry Lane with my own hands!"

The heat of his anger burned through Gabrielle. In astonishment she came quickly to Jeffry's defence. "He isn't actually in this now," she explained. "This is my own freedom I'm working for. I couldn't come to you without that. If the day comes when I can say to you, 'Rufus, I'm not looking backward any more,' then I shall be eager to marry you. If I can't—well, Rufus, I shall never marry you."

"Your honesty appals me."

"It needn't. Not really. Dishonesty between you and me would be cheap. Even loving me as much as you do, you couldn't live with evasions."

He looked at her and felt sick for her body. "Right now I'd be willing to risk it. You're so desirable that I'd toss away all we've been or might be to each other for a chance to possess you. Does that offend you, Gabrielle?"

"No, Rufus, certainly it doesn't. But it wouldn't be enough."

He shrugged his shoulders as if easing them of weight. If he could free himself of her as easily! "You're right, of course," he said. "So we're back at the beginning, aren't we?"

"I don't know where we are, Rufus. But there's something you must promise me. It's terribly important."

As he said nothing but waited for her request, she went on, "Whatever happens to us, we must be friends. If just for the sake of the family and the home you mentioned. I should always like you to be a part of that, Rufus."

The water lapped against the boat. A false background for their emotions. When he answered her, Rufus' voice was steady, devoid of any intensity. "I can't see myself ignoring you, Gabrielle. No matter what happens, you'll always have my friendship."

They were silent again. Bright and still, the sky pressed down upon them. Only the water moved, and that had a lullaby sound.

Rufus laughed dryly. "And to think that in a hundred years it won't make any difference."

Gabrielle's hands locked together. "Perhaps it will, Rufus. Perhaps it will make a great deal of difference to your children and to mine."

His mouth twisted in a spasm of pain. "Let's not talk about your children and mine," he said harshly. "I can take little comfort in them under the circumstances."

He laid hold of the oars. "Shall we find another spot?"

She nodded wordlessly.

38

JULIA and Jeffry peered into the glass case that held the Livingstons' history in the form of journals and diaries.

"That long, thick one belonged to the first James," Julia pointed out. She unlatched the case and took out the black book. She thumbed through it gingerly, paused at a page. Jeffry read over her shoulder, "*Several of the voyageurs stopped for dinner. Gabrielle served them sumptuously. They're a picturesque lot. Childishly gay, childishly sad. Immensely fearless.*"

"Gosh," Jeffry observed, "aren't you afraid to handle it?"

"We don't do this for everybody."

She turned the yellow-edged pages. "*Our new coach came to-day. Gabrielle's coach, I should say. All shining and polished—lined in blue velvet——*"

"Look!" cried Jeffry. "He's drawn a picture of it. Not bad, is it?"

Julia glanced from the picture to Jimmy's shelves of model coaches. "Jimmy's made one just like it," she said. She pointed to the largest model, and Jeffry brought it to her. They compared the replica with the original.

"He's good, isn't he?" inquired Jeffry. "Ye gods, look at the carving. And the initials in gold on the door."

Julia's fingers brushed the tufted blue velvet of the seats. "Such luxury!"

"Even the coachman's seat's upholstered. In red leather."

Julia stared at the brilliant leather. "The coachman," she repeated softly. "The coachman."

She could scarcely wait for Jeffry to go, so eager was she to discuss her sudden inspiration with Jimmy. Perhaps Jeffry sensed her pre-occupation for he took his leave early. The second she closed the door after him Julia rushed up the stairs to Jimmy's room.

"Jimmy! Jimmy!" She pounded on his door.

"My gosh!" Jimmy threw open the door. His purple pyjamas screamed on the threshold. "Where's the fire?"

"Jimmy, I found a name for it——"

"It. My word, Julia, why didn't you tell me!"

Julia's enthusiasm vanished in a flare of anger. "All right, smart Alec, let it go."

"Okay, sober sides, come on in and tell all."

He gave her his favourite chair and sprawled comfortably on the bed. "Well, give!" he said, his arms gesticulating suggestively.

Julia scowled. "It's a name for the restaurant," she said sullenly. "The Coachman's."

Jimmy sat upright on the bed. "My coaches!"

"Jeffry and I were looking at the one in the diary."

"Oh, yeah, the first Gabrielle's. My God, the ancestors again!" He jumped to his feet and executed a jig in the middle of the floor. "Madame Individuality, I think you've got something there."

They dragged James out of bed and hustled him down to the library.

"The name's all right," he approved between yawns, "but I don't think it has much application to a tea-room. You might call it an inn. That matches the coachman perfectly."

"Why not?" said Jimmy. "We could hang one of my coaches above the door."

"It could still be colonial," Julia said.

"In a substantial way," agreed Jimmy.

"Well, Windsor chairs and gate-leg tables."

"Much overdone. How about being different and trying white pine?" Jimmy recommended.

"I'd suggest you get the location first," James said. "It won't take long to decide on an interior once the fundamentals have been acquired."

"It seems to me that the first step is a loan," Jimmy said.

"And I suppose you haven't thought of anyone but Rufus for that," Julia added disagreeably.

"Can you think of anyone better?" demanded Jimmy.

"No. Anyway, I think we need some experience first. That's where I come in. I've had an idea for a long time about getting some first-hand information. I'll have to schedule all my classes in the evening to do it, but maybe I can."

"Well, get going on it," Jimmy advised. "I can see by the set of your teeth it's a secret. In the meantime, I'll arrange a complete outline from stuff I've read. Let's give each other a month. You get your information; I'll get mine. I'm tired of this dilly-dallying."

It took Julia the rest of the week to rearrange her classes. With the utmost tact she made her explanations, taking her youngest pupils as early in the evening as possible, giving the others a later hour.

On Monday morning she donned a smart black dress, a green hat pulled over one eye, green gloves against her black coat, and put in her appearance at the general offices of the Chambers' store.

"I'd like to see the tea-room manager," she told the information clerk in her haughtiest manner.

The girl directed her to the manager's office—a small, neat room off the spacious tea-room. A tall, beautifully dressed woman in her fifties greeted Julia pleasantly.

"Miss Hurley, I'm Julia Livingston. I'm interested in learning the tea-room business."

Maybelle Hurley smiled non-committally. "And in what way can I help you, Miss Livingston?"

Julia replied coolly, "I'd like to understudy your hostesses. Without pay, you understand."

Miss Hurley opened her mouth and closed it. After a moment she said, "I'll have to speak to our store manager about it. I don't really know what he will say. May I call you?"

"Certainly." Julia gave her the Livingston telephone number.

Miss Hurley telephoned her the next afternoon. "I'm sorry, Miss

Livingston, Mr. Cottrell doesn't think it would be good policy to grant your request."

"Oh, I see. Well, thank you, Miss Hurley."

Julia drummed her fingers angrily on the telephone stand. "Huh!" She snapped her fingers. "That for Mr. Cottrell! And you, too, Maybelle Hurley!"

In the morning, groomed to perfection, Julia accosted the secretary of Richard Chambers, owner of the Chambers' store. She informed her casually that she would like to see Mr. Chambers. The practised eyed of the secretary looked her over.

"What name, please?"

"Julia Livingston."

Richard Chambers received Julia with careless gallantry. "I don't believe we've met before, Miss Livingston."

"No." Julia's scrutiny was swift and surprised. Richard Chambers was a young man—perhaps thirty-five. His hair was sleek and dark; his eyes a tired blue; his body too thin for its six foot height.

He sat down behind his desk. His eyes held sharp amusement.

"Well, what are you selling?"

Julia flushed. "An idea."

"Oh, Lord, I have an advertising manager."

"This idea wouldn't interest him. I'd like to understudy your tea-room hostesses."

"Understudy? Oh, I see. You want to go into the business."

"Eventually."

"Still, why come to me? I have a tea-room manager. A very capable one."

"I went to her. She said she'd have to talk to the general manager."

"Oh, yes, Cottrell."

"He didn't like the idea."

Richard Chambers chuckled. "Don't tell me he was afraid of the competition."

Julia returned coldly, "I don't know."

Lights danced in weary eyes. "Tell me all about it."

"There's not much to tell yet." Briefly she outlined the ambitions of the family.

He listened, but he watched the colour brighten in her cheeks; he noticed the deep yellow of her hair, the slim line of her body. When she finished, he commented, "Cottrell shouldn't be so narrow-minded. I really don't think you'll run us out of business."

He picked up his phone. "Miss Kastell, ask Miss Hurley to come

up. At once." He turned to Julia. "Now suppose you tell me about yourself. Where you live. What you do."

A faint smile lifted her mouth. "I've lived here all my life. In fact, our family has lived here a good many years—on Tenth Street and Parkhurst. With my mother and father, three sisters—two now, one's married—and three brothers——"

"Tenth Street and Parkhurst—— Oh, you belong to the Livingston family that owns that old house. The brown stone one. That house has always interested me. Is it as unique as I've heard?"

"We think so. It's a beautiful place. It's old but it's been well kept. It's like living in other years as well as your own."

"How nicely put!"

Julia looked pleased. But she said, "Why am I telling you this? Why do you want to know?"

He laughed. "As if you didn't know!"

She shrugged. "Why not tell me about yourself for the same reason?"

"My dear Miss Livingston, I'm not going to work for you."

Her face whitened. "I beg your pardon."

"Never mind," he said quickly. "You were right the first time. But I couldn't resist it."

His secretary poked her head in at the door. "Miss Hurley is here."

"Ask her to come in."

She entered with easy assurance, but paused uncertainly at the sight of Julia.

"Hello, Miss Hurley. You've met Miss Livingston, I believe."

"Good morning, Mr. Chambers. Yes, Miss Livingston and I have met."

"Sit down." Richard tilted his chair backwards. "Miss Livingston's been telling me about her talk with you. I think in this one instance, we'll let her learn the hostessing angle of the tea-room work. And any other phases she can pick up. Kindly give her all the help you can."

"But Mr. Cottrell——" Miss Hurley began.

"I'll take care of Cottrell."

"Very well, Mr. Chambers." She turned to Julia. "Do you wish to come with me now?"

"If you please." Julia smiled at Richard Chambers. "Thank you very much."

Richard rose to his feet. "Not at all. I'll see you again, Miss Livingston. We have some personal history to clear up."

JIMMY was jubilant over Julia's successful approach to Mr. Chambers. "I've got to hand it to you," he told her, propping his feet on the desk. "Bearding the Chambers' lion in his den. You've sure got crust."

"I like that! After all the trouble I went through." Julia kicked off her slippers. "My feet are killing me."

"How much did Maybelle teach you in one day?"

"A lot of names. She introduced me to so many cooks and waitresses that names and faces started swimming in my head. Then I escorted people to tables, handed out menus, pulled out chairs. I bowed and smiled for hours. The Chambers' tea-room certainly does the business."

James ambled into the library. He started to mix a drink. "Anybody else want one?" Both Jimmy and Julia accepted his offer, and while he poured out brandy and soda, Jimmy gave a dramatic account of Julia's experience at the Chambers' store.

James smiled appreciatively at Julia over his glass. He had to hand it to his eldest daughter. She could cover ground if she had a mind to. "The ball is rolling," he said.

Julia looked at him oddly. "And maybe in a strange direction." If he only knew, she thought! But her reflections dropped to deeper pools: this is one thing I've got to put over. She was shaken at the number of failures she could count for herself up to the present undertaking. The school, of course, had succeeded in a middling way, but it had not given her prominence or authority in her own bailiwick. If the restaurant prospered, if it garnered the right patronage, it might give her a measure of prestige. But it could never compare with the limitless esteem she would have as the wife of Richard Chambers. It would be quite a combination, Julia decided, the Chambers social and material repute and the Livingston heritage.

"Let's allow it a slow roll until the month's up," Jimmy recommended. "About the second week in June we'll really put the curve on it."

For nearly three weeks, the family held only desultory conversations about the Coachman's. Jimmy and Julia worked in their own separate ways to bring their plan to fruition. Jimmy took Rufus into his

confidence. He explained the whole set-up to him, and ended, "I suppose you've surmised where this tale is leading. We need cash, Rufus, about six thousand. And you're the only person I know who has that much dough lying around loose."

Rufus said quietly, "I'll be sorry to lose you, Jimmy. You know that. But there's nothing like your own business. It keeps you on your toes day after day. Someone else's work doesn't always do that. As for the capital—I have it, so you're welcome to it. Get your plans all lined up and I'll see that you have the money."

"Thanks, Rufus."

"Now I have a suggestion," Rufus went on, grinning. "You might display Drake's candies at your cashier's desk. You know—along with your cigars and cigarettes."

"Of course, old man. That would be a pleasure."

At the dinner-table, Jimmy told of his loan negotiation. He flourished through the story and finished, "Of all the damn swell guys in the world, Rufus Drake is the tops. Why in hell you don't marry him, Gabrielle, is more than I can figure out. And don't give me that apple sauce about his not asking you. I wasn't born yesterday."

Gabrielle's colour ebbed. "Don't bother your head about it. I'll do all the figuring necessary."

"How's the Chambers' tea-room?" Larry inquired of Julia.

"Prospering." Julia laughed. "Bob Spencer came in with a new blonde. He nearly dropped dead when I showed them to a table." She glanced at her watch. "How about some more coffee, ma? I've got a date——"

"With Jeffry?" Rene asked.

"What's it to you?" snapped Julia.

"Who else?" Jimmy wondered. And added to everyone at large, "She must have taken my advice about the adhesive tape. Maybe I've missed my calling. I should run a column, 'Practical Advice to the Lovelorn' or 'How to Hold Your Man.'"

Jeffry took Julia to the Hammond Café. "Give me a good stiff pinch," he said, leaning across the table. "I don't believe we're really together. Do you realize this is the first time I've seen you this week? And this is Saturday?"

Julia pressed his arm regretfully. "I know, Jeffry. But I can't help it." She did not say that she was squeezing in every possible moment that she could with him, because she knew her time with him was fleeting and precious. She did say, "I'm simply swamped with

work. My school and the Coachman's eat up both the days and evenings for me."

"The Coachman's!" echoed Jeffry. "What, by all that's holy, is that?"

Julia frowned fleetingly. "To put it mildly, the Coachman's is the family's great adventure." She smiled at his astonishment. "It's been a secret and still is for that matter. But we're just about ready to break into the open, so I guess I can tell you about it. We're going to start an inn, a colonial affair, with one of Jimmy's coaches hanging over the door."

"So that's the reason for your tea-room work. I'll admit that job floored me for a while, especially with your school going full blast. But fire away. I'm all ears."

With as much enjoyment as if she had never discussed it before, Julia went into the plans for the restaurant. When she concluded, Jeffry shook his head at her in amazement. "Where do you get your ambition? I don't mean the ambition to start something. I have that, too. But the stick-to-it, do-or-die attitude of seeing the thing through. I couldn't do it. My ambition peters out in the middle of everything."

For a moment the orchestra swept across their thoughts. Julia clutched at straws. "Perhaps you'd like to work at the inn, too, Jeffry. Not now, but later, when we get into the swing of it."

Jeffry patted her hand. "No, Julia. With most of your family in on the deal, I don't see what good I'd be. I can't cook. I wouldn't wait on tables. About the only thing I could do would be to play the piano for you."

"Jeffry! Why not! I hadn't thought of music before. That might be a beginning for you, too. Plenty of orchestra leaders started the same way."

"I'm afraid not. That's not my idea of working. Music for recreation—fine and dandy. But as a steady job it would be too much of a grind. It would drive me bats."

Julia thought, "Oh, Jeffry—Jeffry!"

Jeffry thought that Julia's beauty grew more marked each time he saw her. He wanted suddenly to touch her—her hair, her mouth, her body. "Let's dance," he said abruptly.

But they couldn't dance for ever. As they sat down again at their table, Jeffry's hand closed over Julia's. "Julia," he whispered, "I love you."

Julia's eyes dimmed with unaccustomed tears. "S-sh," she said, as he was about to speak, "don't say any more. I just want to

remember this." But she wanted to weep for what he had been going to say, and her escape thereby.

Although she prized her hours with Jeffry, during the next week she was glad of work that kept her mind from him, that pushed away the time when she must tell him the truth. Nearly every night when she lay in bed too tired to sleep, she told herself, "This can't last much longer." And her body and her mind ached with longing and grief.

Yet in these late vigils, she recognized her love for Jeffry as a physical attraction only. There was no mental compatibility between them. She saw clearly that if she married him, her energy, her relentless hunger would kill his love; his mediocrity would destroy hers.

"Far better to keep a memory," she admitted to the listening room, "than to lose a rare possession."

40

MAYBELLE HURLEY called to Julia as she passed her office on the way to the tea-room, "Mr. Chambers would like to see you in his office at twelve o'clock."

Julia smiled triumphantly. "Thank you, Miss Hurley."

She found Richard Chambers' cordiality faintly mocking. "I understand this is your last day with us, Miss Livingston. When you were here last, we had a little unfinished business. How would you——"

A buzzer sounded. Richard picked up the telephone receiver. "Hello. Oh, Bones! Sorry, old man, I'm dated up for lunch. Sure. Any time."

He laid down the receiver quickly. His eyes had already returned to Julia. "How about lunching with me, Miss Livingston?" he asked.

"I'd love to," replied Julia.

Julia enjoyed the assurance that carried her through Richard's reception-room, past the discreet eyes of his secretary, into the long, panelled corridor. A private elevator took them down to the garage. An attendant delivered Richard's cream-coloured Cadillac coupé and opened the door while Richard handed Julia into the car's buff and brown interior.

"Swank," thought Julia.

They lunched in the Queen Anne Room of the Brewster Hotel. The organ music was a soft accompaniment to their attraction, to the fantasies already stirring in their minds.

"Now," Richard said when he had given their order, "shall we get on with our second instalment? I believe this is my chapter. You asked me to tell you something about myself. I snubbed you then. I didn't mean it. There simply isn't much to tell. You know that I own the Chambers' store. That I have plenty of money. One sister, no parents living. I drink beyond my capacity. I've been everywhere. Seen everything. Nothing, nobody interests me. Except you. And you do. Perhaps you'd be good for me."

Julia shook her head, and without intention, became completely honest, "I'm not good for anyone."

The waiter brought their soup.

"I've always liked it here," Julia said, her eyes following the gracious lines of the lovely old room.

"Me, too. We'll come here often."

Julia's fingers closed tightly over her spoon. Her eyebrows questioned before she spoke. "Do you always take your hostesses to lunch?"

He laughed. "Only when they're blonde and good-looking."

"Oh, I see. Just one of the gang."

He said smoothly, "Julia, my dear, I'll make a bargain with you. I'll see that you get a good bit of personal advertising for your inn if you'll dine with me—often."

She was silent, but her mind hummed. She thought, "He's handsome, wealthy, successful, everything I could wish. He likes me, too." The humming slipped into a song. "This is it! This is it!"

He was smiling at her—a strangely tight smile that did not reach the strained blue eyes. "Well?"

She said, "Your bargain interests me, Mr. Chambers." The image of Jeffry flashed across her thoughts. Jeffry, who enchanted her, yet had none of the qualities that Julia sought in a husband. But this was not her moment of betrayal. She had betrayed him long ago.

The next evening Jeffry called on Julia. He had bought a new Ford in the afternoon, and he stopped at the house to show it to her. Julia admired the car, but she kept remembering the Chambers' Cadillac. Over the car's blue hood, she looked oddly at Jeffry. Why was he an image in her mind and Richard already a reality? Suffused with a desire for his nearness, she reached a hand to Jeffry.

He grasped it quickly. "How about a ride?" he asked.

She nodded, her throat tightening with emotion.

In the slow dusk, they followed the Hill Road to Valley Street, crossed the Valley Street Bridge to the River Drive. They took the twisting, picturesque road to Leslie Park, then on to Crystal Falls.

High above the river, high above the picnic grounds, Jeffry parked the car. "Beautiful here, isn't it?" he said.

"Yes, beautiful."

He turned to her, drew her into his arms. As his lips touched her hair, her cheeks, and found her mouth, she knew that near to him she was lost. Her love was force and hunger, miraculously stilled to tenderness. "I'll never feel like this again," she thought sadly.

Jeffry said, with assurance, "You do love me, don't you, Julia?"

"Of course, of course. I always have."

"Always?" He laughed gently. "Has it been so long?"

Her voice choked. "The shortest time, yet for ever."

"But we have all the rest of our lives. Will you marry me soon, Julia? To-morrow?"

She clung to the word. "To-morrow. My darling, how could I marry you to-morrow?" She added shakily, trying to stem the tide of panic that rushed over her, "Let's compromise. I'll give you your answer then. How's that?"

He said huskily, impatiently, "I want you now, Julia. To-night. But I couldn't take you once and let you go. I've got to have you for keeps. So why not to-night? Isn't 'yes' a simple word?" He was smiling at her, his hair and eyes dark above her.

Jeffry, Jeffry, it would be easier to give you myself at this moment than to say that one small word!

Aloud she said, "I wish it were simple. Marriage isn't simple, Jeffry. I can't make such a momentous decision now. Not to-night when you have your arms around me. Later to-night when I'm more quiet, I shall write you a letter——"

Jeffry frowned and stared hard at her. "A letter?"

"Yes. To tell you how I feel about marriage and you." She buried her face in his shoulder, hating her weakness and her treachery. "You've never had a letter from me, have you?" she asked in a muffled voice.

He laughed, his doubts dispelled with the warmth of her embrace. His arms tightened about her. "A letter," he said reluctantly. "Well, so be it. But make it special delivery."

She did not write to him that night. She couldn't. Julia was too strained with emotion, too full of heart to destroy this strange self

that love had created. She scarcely understood herself. She went to bed and remembered all the hours she had spent with Jeffry, pictured them upon the wall. When she fell asleep, she had not come to the letter she must write.

In the morning she awoke early. Through the semblance of sleep, she watched Gabrielle dress for the office. A green dress which was a salute to spring. Dark curls combed firmly into place. Pale cheeks. A gently crimsoned mouth. Startlingly, violently, Julia hated Gabrielle—Gabrielle who would take and cherish what she had thrown away. Clearly Julia recalled the look on her sister's face as Jeffry fastened her skates.

When Gabrielle had closed the door softly behind her, Julia tossed back the bedclothes. While she was dressing, a knock sounded at her door. "Who is it?" she asked.

"Jimmy. We've got a lot of work to do this morning."

"Okay. I'll meet you in the library after I've grabbed a bite to eat."

Jimmy went away whistling, and Julia finished dressing. She sat for a long while holding her pen and writing-pad in her lap. She was quiet now. Cool and sure. And curiously empty. She saw things as they were and not as she wanted to see them. Finally she wrote:

"We weren't meant to be together, Jeffry. We have nothing in common except our love for each other, and that isn't enough. You like your life as it is. You are content to live simply. I'm not, Jeffry. Why dissemble? I want everything. Money, esteem, power. I'd be miserable without them, and I'd make you miserable, too. I've thought it all out carefully. I know I'm right."

Still she held him by taut, invisible threads, unwilling to let go:

"I love you. I shall always love you. But I can't marry you."

He might go to Gabrielle now. He might grow old and content in the warm comfort of her love. But on a dusky afternoon, filled with snow and a crisp wind; in a candle-lit room; in the turn of a bright head; the subtle fragrance of a perfume, he will remember me, Julia thought. Remember, and wonder, and in no small measure, regret.

JIMMY was grouching behind the library desk when Julia finally appeared. "So you actually decided to stir your stumps," he exclaimed as she came in. "It's been a cool hour since you said you were coming down. What did you do? Clean up the kitchen?"

"Stop crabbing," Julia advised, sinking into a chair. "Let's get down to business."

Jimmy surveyed her malevolently. "What's the matter with you? Jeffry give you the air?"

"No," said Julia through stiff lips.

A swift scrutiny of her face and Jimmy was at once contrite. "Sorry." He shuffled a stack of papers into a semblance of neatness. "This is our red-letter day," he rattled on. "The Coachman's Inn comes to life. I've been looking around a bit. There's a place down on Cromwell Avenue and Twenty-third Street—all done in pine panelling. It's a fair size, too. It used to belong to the Spencer bookstore."

"That's a good location. We'd get shoppers, office workers, theatre crowds. What about kitchen facilities?"

"Don't know," Jimmy confessed, more leisurely. "There's a back room, but how large it is I can't say. I'll look into it to-morrow and also check up on kitchen equipment for the amount of space available."

"We might as well do it to-day. Then if we want it, you can get the money from Rufus to-morrow——"

"My dear Julia, I'm one up on you. The money's already in my account at the bank. I saw to that on Saturday."

Julia rubbed tired eyes. "At what interest? What security?"

"Six per cent interest—at my request. Security?" He laughed. "My John Hancock."

"My, he's certainly being noble."

"Rufus? You make me sick!" roared Jimmy. "Can't you give the devil his due?"

"Oh, let's not get involved," Julia said wearily. "The important thing is we've got the money. What next?"

"Location," Jimmy said. "Seating capacity. Kitchen space and equipment."

"Help. Depending on the seating capacity."

Jimmy nodded. "Yeah. Furniture, curtains, decorations, advertising."

"Don't forget linens and china. And food supplies."

"Pat O'Day gave me the low-down on food purchasing. I'll attend to that. You can do the hiring and making up the menus. Say, I've been thinking about a cook. Who could be better for us than Anna Smoll?"

Julia sat upright. "My word, yes. That's a grand idea. We ought to talk to her right now."

They came upon Anna dropping spoonfuls of dough on rows and rows of cookie sheets. She did not pause in her work while Jimmy explained the situation to her. "You'd make us a swell cook," he told her. "In fact, I think you'd ensure the success of our restaurant."

Anna shoved several sheets into the oven before she deigned to reply. Then she faced him, her expression unchanged from her usual stolid mask. "I wouldn't like it," she said. "I like it here."

"But it will mean more money," cried Julia.

Anna stared at her unwinkingly. "I like it here." She began to clear away the cooking utensils.

Jimmy groaned. "Come on, Julia. That's one good bet out the window. We might as well give up. And do a little praying."

The renting agent who handled the Cromwell Avenue store was delighted to show it to Jimmy and Julia. "We've never had restaurant in here," he said, "but it should make a fine one. The pine panelling alone would set your place apart."

Jimmy made a thorough estimate of the place. "I'd say we could get about seventy-five chairs in the main room. Without it looking crowded or empty either. Then this smaller room for the kitchen——"

"What about expansion?" asked Julia.

The agent hesitated. "You might be able to use the space next door—at some future date, of course."

"As long as there's a possibility," Jimmy said. "That's all we want."

"Plenty of storage room," Julia observed as they entered a huge back room.

Jimmy was primarily interested in the kitchen. He took out a tape-measure and went from wall to wall, adjusting a note-book kitchen plan to new measurements.

"It will do," he announced with satisfaction. He returned the tape-measure to his pocket. "See here, Julia. The range and oven

against the back wall. A good-sized table and refrigerator to the left. A sink and ice-cream equipment on the smaller side. Steam-table and racks for pots and pans in the centre."

"You forgot the service shelf," Julia said.

"No, I didn't. That's here, near the door to the dining-room. The coffee-urn, too."

Julia glanced over his shoulder. "According to your drawing, we'd have to have another door put in."

"That's right," Jimmy agreed. "To take care of the soiled dishes from the dining-room. Washing them and shelves for clean ones."

"More sinks on that side, then."

"Yes. See this plan, Mr. Kelley. How about our cutting another door through this wall? Have you any objections?"

"No, I think not," Mr. Kelley replied. "If you take the place, we'll see that your lease has an improvement and alterations clause."

"It looks good to me," Jimmy declared. He turned to Julia. "What do you say we take it?"

"I don't think we would be making a mistake."

At the door, both Jimmy and Julia paused for a last look at the pine-panelled interior. They shook hands solemnly with each other.

42

THAT same evening Jeffry knocked on the Livingstons' weather-stained front door. It was Gabrielle who let him into the house. Into warmth and colour that entered aching into his senses.

"Where's Julia?" he asked.

"She's out, Jeffry." Gabrielle saw his face in the light. "Jeffry—are you ill?"

He shrugged. "Perhaps I am."

She said, "Come into the living-room by the fire. It's so wet and cold outside——" Her voice trailed into puzzled silence.

He tossed his raincoat and hat on the settee and followed her into the living-room. Julia's letter crackled in his pocket. They faced each other across the hearth.

"Well, Gabrielle——"

"Yes, Jeffry?"

His mouth contorted. "Julia threw me over."

Gabrielle had difficulty in breathing. She thought, "If I reach out to touch him, he won't be there."

"You're not surprised?"

She winced for him—for his shattered pride, for his lost arrogance, for the wound that slowly widened.

"I am surprised," she said. And added, "I don't see how anyone could throw you over."

His laughter jangled. "I have neither money nor ability, Gabrielle. I'll probably never have either——"

She went to him quickly, laying a hand on his shoulder. "Don't, Jeffry. You've been hurt, I know. But you mustn't let it floor you. You've got to keep your head up and meet what's coming to you. Father always says, 'It's living that's important.' And it's true, Jeffry."

Jeffry leaned his head against her arm. "You're sweet, Gabrielle. Sweet."

Long after he had gone, Gabrielle sat before the fire. Her heart was full of conflicting emotions. She had tasted despair herself—loving Jeffry and seeing him adore her sister. But this despair of Jeffry's she had sampled was sweetly bitter to her tongue.

When Julia came home after twelve o'clock, she found Gabrielle still sitting there. "My goodness—what are you mooning about?"

"Oh, just thinking." She yawned and stretched.

"Any calls?" inquired Julia.

Gabrielle's glance levelled. "Richard Chambers called."

Julia's eyebrows lifted. "Really! What did he say?"

"That he'd call again. And—Julia, Jeffry was here."

"Oh——"

"He was terribly upset."

Julia turned her back on Gabrielle and walked toward the door. She paused on the threshold. "I'm glad I wasn't home," she said. "I thought he'd come."

A small silence ticked between them.

"Well——" Julia hesitated. "I'm going to bed. Coming?"

"Not right away."

Julia ran upstairs. She undressed hastily. She didn't want to think, to delve into futile grief. As she rummaged through the wardrobe for her bedroom slippers, her hands encountered the skates she had long forgotten to put away. She drew them out to the light. "At least I won't have to be an outdoor girl any more," she said aloud. And wept over the shining blades.

At breakfast she was controlled and aloof. Over a scarcely touched plate of French toast, she announced, "It looks as if we'll get the furniture and curtains and knick-knacks into the Coachman's later this week. You and Larry," she told Jimmy, "will have to start finishing the chairs and tables right away. How about the coach for the door? When will that be done?"

"Sometime next week. You'd better get busy with the hiring."

"Oh, I will. If I can find a couple of down-to-earth good cooks, I won't worry about the rest of the help."

"How much help are you looking for?" Larry asked.

"Cook, fry-cook, pastry-cook, salad-girl, vegetable-girl——"

"Two of each," Jimmy put in. "We'll need help for two shifts. No breakfast and no afternoon teas. We gave that up. So we'll just be serving lunches, dinners, and for a while anyway, after-theatre snacks."

Jimmy and Julia had arranged to meet at the inn at eleven o'clock. She was leaving the house for the beauty-parlour when the telephone rang. She answered it impatiently and immediately recognized Richard Chambers' voice.

"Hello there, Julia. Aren't you the girl who makes bargains?"

Her pulses pounded. "Oh, no. I'm the girl who accepts them—if they're to my advantage."

"I usually take all the advantages. But you never can tell. May I step around to-night about eight-thirty?"

"That would be nice."

Richard stalked into the old hall that evening with full appreciation of what he saw. "You've got something I haven't," he said, as he accompanied Julia to the living-room. "Heritage."

Julia thought, "You have lots of things I haven't, too. And I want them." But she said, "We all have heritage."

"Not in the same degree."

James and Gabrielle abandoned their cribbage game to acknowledge Julia's introduction of Richard. There was sly triumph in the smile that attended Julia's formality.

"So you're young Chambers," James observed, looking him over thoughtfully. "I knew your father, Mr. Chambers. I handled a number of cases for him many years ago."

"Did you, indeed, sir? He was a great guy—my father."

"You look a lot like him."

"That's as far as the likeness goes, I'm afraid."

Richard's glance lighted on Gabrielle and caught her twinkling

smile. "Just why are you grinning at me like a Cheshire cat?" he demanded.

Her laughter danced back at him. "I have a score to settle with you. I worked in your store during the Christmas rush season, and I never experienced anything like it in my life."

"How was the pay?"

Gabrielle grimaced. "Definitely unfair to the poor working-girl."

Julia broke in sharply. "Really, Gabrielle!"

Richard laughed. "I don't suppose you'll believe me, but some of my clerks actually put on weight with the wages I pay."

"You have a fine business," James complimented him. "It seems to me you've held to your father's traditions remarkably well."

"We keep an even keel," Richard said. "Father always loathed cut-throat tactics and I agree with him." He turned to Julia. "I thought you might like to take in a movie. There are several good ones downtown."

After Julia and Richard had left, James and Gabrielle resumed their game. James picked up his cards in a preoccupied way. "I wonder what the advent of Mr. Chambers means to Jeffry Lane."

"I don't know if Mr. Chambers was the cause," Gabrielle said slowly, "but Julia refused to marry Jeffry."

"Hm. Your discard, my dear. I always thought Julia's course was set on a different road from Jeffry's. But you can't tell about love. It makes the sanest people do the damndest things. But Julia seems to be saner than most."

"You mean—you think she did the right thing?" Gabrielle's voice held surprise. Instinctively she recoiled from Julia's cold-blooded rejection of Jeffry in favour of Richard, who could give her everything else, if not love.

"Undoubtedly," James replied. "Love can't win every battle, Gabrielle. Neither can sex run a marriage. Julia and Jeffry are as fundamentally different as you and Julia are. If they married, they'd hate each other in a year. Julia couldn't stand his lack of ambition."

"But she loves him," Gabrielle insisted. "If Julia ever loved anyone, it's Jeffry."

James scrutinized Gabrielle's face. Her quiet, lovely face. "This leaves you at loose ends again, doesn't it?"

She was already aware of this. The thought was a hammer at her heart. But she said in an expressionless voice, "I wonder. I keep telling myself I'm the one he'll turn to—if only to be near Julia again."

But will he? Father—do you think I'm a fool to wait so eagerly for something that may never happen? "

James sighed. "You and Rufus are both fools," he said wearily. "It's your first play."

Gabrielle laid down a card. "Seven," she said.

James played an eight. "Fifteen two," he counted and pegged absently.

Jimmy barged into the room. "Anybody seen my key-ring? "

They shook their heads at him and he began to search sketchily about the room. "Say, who did that ritzy Cadillac belong to? It was parked in front of the house for quite a while."

"Relax," advised Gabrielle. "It probably belonged to Richard Chambers."

"What! " Jimmy straightened above an end table. "You mean he was here? In the flesh? In this house? "

Gabrielle nodded. "He took Julia to a movie."

"Well, I'll be damned! "

Would this be the last step for Julia, Gabrielle wondered, or was it merely another stepping-stone? Did it mean a thing to her that Jeffry had come to the house, raw with pain from her rejection? Would it mean a thing to her if he turned now to Gabrielle, whose love did not balk at the thought of being second best?

43

JIMMY paced back and forth across the library. The Coachman's was to open the next week, and he found it hard to settle himself to a commonplace belief in its actuality.

"For heaven's sake, sit down! " exclaimed Julia. "If you walk over my feet once more, I'll scream."

"Phooey! " Jimmy compromised by leaning against the fireplace.

"Any left-overs to be done? " James asked.

Julia groaned. There were so many things still undone that she hated to give them magnitude by putting them into words. But she enumerated them all for James' benefit. His calm acceptance of the inevitability of the tag ends gave her reassurance. "Everything will work out in his own good time," he said. "You've got a whole

week." He asked about the announcement for the papers and Jimmy said, "They're all in."

Julia came out with a surprise: Richard was reserving twenty-five places for a private party for the opening dinner. Jimmy emitted a whoop of delight at the news, and Larry declared that their family would just about take care of the rest of the inn's available space.

"Not by a long shot!" said Jimmy.

Gabrielle sauntered into the conference. "Three guesses what you're all talking about."

"You're just the person I want to see," said Julia. "How about playing the piano for us on the opening night?"

"Oh, sure. But don't expect it to be a regular thing."

Julia retorted that it wouldn't hurt her sister a bit to donate an hour or so an evening to the good cause, but Gabrielle refused to be drawn into an argument. Interested as she was in the restaurant, she had her own work to do, and it drained away all of her spare time, let alone taking on any extra activity. She turned to Jimmy, "How did you come out about the furniture?"

"You should see it," he replied. "Larry and I are wonderful finishers. The maple blends in pretty good with the room. But we did a lot of work on it, believe me. Of course," he added, with faint mockery, "Larry's athletic shoulders can stand all that rubbing, but puny me——" He flexed his arms painfully.

"What's bothering me," James admitted, "is how you can take care of two jobs, Julia. What are you going to do about your school?"

"Oh, I thought we had discussed that with you. I'll only have two weeks of school after the restaurant opens. We picked Wednesday night for the opening because I don't have any classes then. So I'll be there for the big event. Then until my classes are over entirely——"

"I'll do the honours for dinner," chimed in Jimmy.

"Neither you nor Jimmy can work fourteen hours a day," James reminded her.

Julia agreed, but Jimmy suggested that Rene and Larry might eventually alternate with them. Larry, however, demurred. "You can't pay me enough. I couldn't afford to stop working with Rufus for the salary you would give me."

"Don't forget, father," Jimmy said, grinning, "we have to make our board bills or lose our happy home."

The possibility of using Rene's help seemed dubious, too. She had graduated from high school in June, it was true, but her youth was against her. They decided that the head waitress could take over

occasionally for the after-theatre business, but Jimmy made it clear that no one outside the family would handle the cash-box.

Julia looked at her watch. "Sorry, folks. I have to be going. I'm taking Richard down for a preview of the place."

"Don't waste any electricity," Jimmy called after her.

Richard lifted the horseshoe knocker that graced the Coachman's heavy oak door. "In keeping," he said. "And this door—it's new, isn't it?"

"Yes, we put that in," Julia replied, "with practically the last of my personal savings. Everybody thought it was an extravagance but me."

Richard pushed open the door, and Julia fumbled for the light switch. Brass lanterns flamed as she pressed the button. Sturdy maple chairs and armchairs emerged from the shadows. Copper gleamed on a hanging shelf. Criss-cross filmy curtains covered wide high windows, and on one window-sill stood a colonial coach, but the other sill was empty.

Richard examined the carriage. "I'll bet Jimmy could strike up an exclusive business in furniture designing. These are excellent. I'd like to buy some for our own gift shop."

"Please don't mention it to him," Julia begged. "He might get ideas. And we've got all we can handle right now."

They inspected the kitchen and the store-room, and returned to the dining-room. Richard played a few notes on the piano. "My musical education runs to *Peter, Peter, Pumpkin Eater*," he said, drumming out the chords.

Julia stared at him oddly. "But you have other accomplishments."

He laughed harshly. "Do you think so?"

The walls pressed upon Julia. The lanterns flickered and swayed before her eyes. "Let's go," she said. "Come, Richard, let's go."

"I hope you're having a good dinner on opening night," Richard said, as he locked the front door. Above him, the sign of the coach swung and creaked in the wind.

"We are," Julia assured him. "That is, if our cook turns out the way we think she will."

"If she doesn't, God help you."

Julia knew that the food was now the important factor. Everything else had been accounted for,

THE Coachman's heavy oak door opened and closed, opened and closed. Julia, glowing in a green taffeta suit, bowed and smiled. "Good evening. A table for four? A table for two?"

Waitresses in flowered chintz dresses moved in colour from table to table. In the kitchen, a broad-faced, heavy-bodied cook supervised the kitchen with efficiency and dispatch. And in the dining-room:

"I'll have a steak. Medium rare."

"Give me french fries. Buttered peas. Oh, yes, and coffee. Of course, coffee."

"Good evening, Richard. Your table is over here."

"How's it going, Julia?"

"Don't ask me. I can't think."

Over trays of food, trays of soiled dishes, over and above the hum of conversation, Gabrielle played *Moonbeams*, *The Streets of Old New York*, *Alice Blue Gown*, *Roses of Picardy*.

Seated with the Livingstons, Paul Dumas and Kit, Rufus exclaimed over the ham loaf while James paid it the ultimate in compliments as far as he was concerned by saying it was as good as Anna's.

Jimmy joined them briefly. "Everything okay?"

"Fine," Kit said.

Jimmy nodded and drifted off. His eyes were everywhere. He reminded a waitress that water was needed at the last table, he inspected the trays that were carried back to the kitchen, but he steered clear of the cook who would allow no interference with her cooking. In a brief moment of relaxation, he leaned against the cashier's desk where Julia was temporarily enthroned. "Receipts good?" he asked.

"Fair. Of course, the turnover won't be much."

"Give us time."

Jimmy was off again, this time to prod a loitering bus-boy. Watching him, James remarked that he would be a nervous wreck in a month. But Rufus disagreed. He had a wholesome respect for Jimmy's business sense.

"I suppose we'd better give up our seats," Dumas said.

"Oh, the place isn't crowded," Mary objected.

"Julia's lucky she tagged on to Richard Chambers," Kit remarked. "He can give the place a lot of publicity."

"At the expense of his own tea-room?" Mary asked sceptically.

"Don't ever think it will be at his expense," James said. "He's nobody's fool. The Chambers' tea-room is too well established to fear petty competition. They have that to contend with every day."

Rufus wanted to ask, "Where's Jeffry? What's happened to Jeffry Lane?" But he said nothing. He only glanced curiously at the tall dark figure who dominated the mixed group near the window. However altered the circumstances, he thought, watching Gabrielle, whose skilled fingers brought *The Message of the Violet* from the piano, he had said all he could say to her. The next move was hers.

The Livingston party went on to the movies, and then, with the exception of Dumas, returned to the Coachman's for a light supper. They found only a sprinkling of people around the maple tables.

Jimmy looked haggard. "I'll have a cup of coffee with you," he said. He grinned at Julia. "Dogs barking?"

"I may be dead but I'm not buried yet," Julia retorted.

"How did you make out?" James asked.

"Pretty well," Julia answered, "only I think we overstocked on food."

"Let's hope we can use it up to-morrow," said Jimmy.

"Hash!" said Larry blithely.

Rufus and Gabrielle bent their heads over the sandwich menu. "I don't know why I even look at it," Gabrielle said. "I know it by heart. You've no idea how many times I typed it and retyped it. I'll have a bacon and tomato."

Everyone ate at a leisurely pace and chatted with fine disregard for time. James reflected that they were all acting as if they were at home. The family seemed quite intact even in this new environment. And the family spirit flashed unimpaired.

Richard drove Julia home. "It will get easier," he comforted her, noticing her weariness. "And busier. I can tell by the food and the comments of my guests." He walked around the car and slid in beside her.

"Do you think it went all right?" Julia asked.

"As an outsider looking in, I'd say so. Your bookkeeping will tell you better than I can how well it went over."

"Jimmy will go into that in the morning." Her eyes searched his profile, sharp against passing street lights. "Are you amused at us or interested?"

A smile touched his mouth. "I'll admit to amusement at first. Now it goes beyond that. I have a wholesome respect for you and

Jimmy. Yes, and your entire family." He looked at her searchingly. "But there's more to my interest than that. I wouldn't have bothered about you or your restaurant if I hadn't liked you, Julia. That may not surprise you—my liking you, I mean. But it does me, for my personal affections are usually transient. But you are my kind of person. That may not be a compliment, but you can take it for all it's worth. We're alike, you and I. Except that perhaps I like you better than you do me."

"Perhaps," said Julia non-committally and wanted to close her eyes against the memory of Jeffry. She did not want to be reminded of the love she was giving up for the man who sat beside her now, rich in all the mundane assets that she craved. She arrived home, feeling empty and depressed. The Coachman's had opened successfully, but Julia had a momentary sense of defeat.

45

GABRIELLE pushed aside Jimmy's untouched plate of scrambled eggs and laid the morning *Beacon* in front of him. "Wake up, my cherub," she said. "You made the papers."

Jimmy opened one eye and followed her finger as it moved along the *Strolling Reporter's* column:

"The historical Livingston family springs another idea. This time it's an inn called the Coachman's. The sign of the coach over the door, pine panelling, maple furniture, and above all, food that actually melts in your mouth. I had stewed chicken and dumplings there, the like of which I haven't tasted since grandmother's day. Why don't you try it sometime?"

Julia looked across at Gabrielle impatiently. "Read it out loud," she said. Gabrielle ran through it smoothly.

"Fame and fortune here we come!" whooped Larry.

On the books, their first week's business showed a high average in expenses. They had streaked to eighty-seven per cent out of an allowed ninety. But the family decided that for greenhorns Jimmy and Julia were doing very well.

James acknowledged that one phase of the restaurant bothered him. It disrupted the Livingston home-life. It pleased him that their dinners had always been a settling-board. He liked to have his family around, drowning him out with their arguments. But, as Julia pointed out, they would still have Sunday evenings. Crumbs instead of the whole loaf, James thought.

Rene wanted to know when she could start working for them. Julia assured her that she could begin learning any time. She would have liked to have the restaurant wholly a family affair, but she realized that was impossible.

Mary broke in with her usual dampening effect. "Now, listen, all of you," she ordered. "Don't think this restaurant is going to let you out of paying board and room. You can take off for the meals you eat at the inn, but that's all."

"Oh, ma," protested Julia. "We've never held out on you yet."

"Where's your spirit of adventure, Mary?" James asked. "The kids are really doing something. You should give them more credit and a lot more leeway."

"We'll see how much they're doing," said Mary. "Thousands of dollars in debt——"

"Oh, ma! Please!" cried Gabrielle.

Jimmy went serenely about making plans for himself and Julia. They were to stagger their free evenings for the week, each one having every other evening off from eight to twelve. Neither one of them could keep up the pace of constant working.

Saturday evening Rufus sauntered into the Coachman's and saluted Jimmy briefly. Jimmy led him to a small table against the wall and discussed their progress with him. They were getting a good following. Substantial people were drifting in—friends of Richard Chambers and townspeople long familiar with the Livingston name. They were learning to order more economically, and to iron out some of their preliminary mistakes.

Between snatches of conversation with Jimmy, Rufus ate an excellent dinner. He missed Gabrielle's music. After he left the inn, he stopped in at the Queen Anne bar, where he rubbed elbows with Jeffry Lane, who was upright but bleary-eyed over a Scotch and soda. He nodded politely to Rufus. "How are you, Drake? Have one on me."

Rufus gave his order to the bar-tender. "How've you been, Jeffry?"

"Can't remember." Jeffry downed his Scotch and thrust his glass at an attendant. "I'm pickling a memory," he informed Rufus.

"About as good a thing to do with it as I can think of."

"How do you know?" Jeffry demanded contentiously.

"Oh, I've pickled 'em often," Rufus rejoined carelessly.

"You don't say."

"Yeah." Rufus finished his drink and paid for Jeffry's Scotch.

"See you again, Jeffry."

"Aw, stick around. Evening's young."

"Sorry, but I've got to amble. Got a date."

Jeffry leaned his elbows on the bar. "Hell, what's a date? I have 'em, too. But I love 'em and leave 'em. It's catching," he added sombrelly. "Leaving 'em."

Rufus stared at him hard, then asked, "Can I take you anywhere? "

"Not me. I'm sitting right here until I can't see the buttons"—and he pointed to the bar-tender—"on that guy's coat."

Julia and Gabrielle crossed paths with Jeffry just before the dinner-hour on a Thursday evening. The two girls were hurrying down Cromwell Avenue to the Coachman's when Jeffry, a frowzy young woman clinging to his arm, passed by without seeing them.

The sisters avoided each other's eyes, but Julia raved, "Wouldn't you think he'd meet such a woman in an alley? She might as well carry a red light as to have a face like that."

Gabrielle felt sick. "I'm glad he didn't see us," she thought. And during the days that crept away from her, she tried to tell herself that it was a phase, a momentary weakness that he would snap out of quickly.

Although it seemed long to her, in reality it was only the last of July before Gabrielle saw Jeffry again. On a Saturday morning, a few minutes before noon, he stopped at Dr. Cameron's office to see her.

Colour burning her cheeks, Gabrielle greeted him happily. This was not the Jeffry she had last seen. This was the old Jeffry—thinner, his features sharpened in the leanness of his face, but jaunty and alert. Gabrielle's heart sang. This was what she had been hoping for. If it were hunger for news of Julia that brought him, it didn't matter. He had come.

"I'm on a vacation," he told her. "I thought we might have lunch together."

"Oh, I'd like that."

They lunched at the Queen Anne Room. "My favourite spot," Jeffry said, his glance straying to the bright coats of the men in the orchestra.

"That's treason," Gabrielle told him.

Jeffry looked puzzled, then he smiled slightly. "Oh, yes, the Coachman's."

The waiter broke into a tense silence. Jeffry ordered a Tom Collin for Gabrielle; a Martini for himself. "I thought by this time," he said, "you might be married to Rufus."

Her fingers paused on a napkin. "I'm not going to marry Rufus," she said.

"But I thought—I mean—I understood you were in love with him. That you were in love—with each other."

Gabrielle's white hat described a quick denial. "I'm not in love with him."

Jeffry picked up his drink. "Good," he said. "Then there's no reason you and I can't see more of each other."

"No reason at all," said Gabrielle, and breathed a little prayer.

"How's the rest of the family?" Jeffry inquired casually.

"Oh, they're fine."

He poured ketchup over his steak. "I understand the restaurant is going over big."

"Well, it is doing better all the time. But Jimmy and Julia are pretty lavish with their food. So their profit isn't much."

"I suppose by this time Julia's school has gone by the board," Jeffry observed easily.

Gabrielle had a moment of panic, a welling up of futility. But she spoke quietly of her sister, telling him that Julia was forced to give up her school because her hours at the restaurant gave her very little time to herself even without her classes.

Jeffry took Gabrielle home, but he did not go into the house. He left her at the door. "Do you like picnics?" he asked, his eyes on her but his heart beyond the windows.

She nodded, words locked in her throat.

They arranged to picnic the following Sunday, and all week Gabrielle put off telling Julia of the plan. On Sunday morning she awoke to Julia's alarm.

"Oh, Lord," Julia groaned, burying her head in the pillow. "I don't think I can do it. And look at you, lying there wide awake when you could be sleeping." She slid out of bed and pulled on a robe.

Gabrielle watched her yawn her way to the dressing-table. "Julia——"

"Yes?" Julia slapped cold cream over her face.

"I had lunch with Jeffry last week."

Julia's hands pressed against the table. "Well?" The word was a tight-rope on which she balanced precariously.

"He's taking me on a picnic this morning."

Julia picked up a piece of cleansing tissue. She had made servants of her hands and face. "Isn't it rather unusual—your listing your activities for my benefit?"

"I thought you might like to know," said Gabrielle unhappily.

"Thanks," returned Julia coldly.

Her mouth was bitter as she hastened with her dressing. As the days slid past her hunger for Jeffry gnawed through every hour of the day. Busy as she was, his image kept intruding on her consciousness, her need for him deepened. And now what she had feared had come to pass. He was seeking comfort from Gabrielle. He would find it, and she, Julia, might fade completely from the picture. It had not been shattering to see Rufus turn to Gabrielle, or Jerald to Sue, but Jeffry's rebound shook the foundations of her emotions. The price of her renunciation was higher than she had dreamed.

Right after breakfast, she dashed down the hall, pulled open the door and nearly fell into Jeffry's arms. He righted her unsmilingly. They stared at each other.

"Hello, Julia."

"Hello, Jeffry. Won't you come in?"

Facing him, there was no anger left in her over the woman who had hung on his arm. In a wave of anguish, she wondered if her will-power could some day subdue her love for him, or if her battle was to be a losing one. But she smiled at him in coolness and forced strength.

Jeffry stepped purposefully into the hall. "I'm glad we met like this," he said. "It would have to happen sometime. Because"—the grey eyes darkened over her—"I'll probably be calling a lot to see Gabrielle. She tells me she's not in love with Rufus."

Julia's control did not waver. "No," she said, "Gabrielle has never been in love with Rufus." She added, "She's in the kitchen—packing a lunch. You can wait for her in the living-room. I'm sorry I can't stay, but I'm late as it is."

Gabrielle and Jeffry were leaving the house when the telephone rang. Gabrielle hurried back to answer it. It was Rufus, asking her if she would go for a ride with him in the afternoon.

Tight bands squeezed Gabrielle's heart. But she would not evade Rufus. "I'm sorry. I can't. I'm going on a picnic—with Jeffry." Because she loved Jeffry so desperately herself, she suffered for Rufus through his moment of silence.

Then he said pleasantly, "Okay. I'll call you next week."

Gabrielle slipped the receiver on the hook. Her mouth trembled. Why was it that she must continually hurt Rufus, who had every quality a woman might desire in a man? Who was being gracious even now, knowing what her answer implied? But she resolutely dismissed him from her mind, and her heart picking up its song, joined Jeffry on the front steps.

When Gabrielle took her lesson on Wednesday, her voice mirrored her happiness to Paul Dumas. It was lilting, brilliant. After her exercises and an aria from *Don Giovanni*, she went impulsively into *Comin' Thro' the Rye, Annie Laurie, Carry Me Back to Old Virginia*.

Dumas made no comment while she sang, but over their traditional tea, he said, "I've never seen you more radiant, Gabrielle. Has everything you wished for come your way?"

She smiled—a gay and confident smile. "Let's say everything I wished for is coming my way." She stared into her teacup. "I suppose you've guessed. I've been seeing Jeffry, Mr. Dumas."

"I didn't have to guess. It was in your voice, in your eyes."

Gabrielle said slowly, "It's definitely over between Jeffry and Julia."

"Of course."

She made haste to say, as if in defence, "But there's nothing between us. I still go out with Rufus, too."

He nodded approvingly. "I think that's wise. But this will improve your work, Gabrielle. It has already improved it. Providing you do not let it swamp you. I am glad you are happier. For a time I felt worried about you. Fruitless love may give an artist the yearning note, but it is essentially a disintegrating experience."

However, as July passed into August, and August edged hotly toward September, Gabrielle and Gabrielle's voice lost their spontaneity. A mist had dimmed the looking-glass.

46

FROM the sidelines, Sue, misshapen but rosy-cheeked and bubbling, applauded while Jerald and Gabrielle shook hands in approved sportsmanship fashion with Jeffry and Rene, winners of the day's tennis match.

"What are you clapping for?" Jerald shouted across the court. "I lost!"

Sue wrinkled her nose at him. "That's it! I was cheering for the other side."

"Such wifely devotion."

The players were at Sue's side now. She linked her arm through her husband's. "I'm revenged," she said. "If I can't beat you, at least there are other people who can."

Gabrielle came to Jerald's aid. "It was my fault. I pulled the boners."

"When do we eat?" Jeffry demanded.

"Yes, indeed," cried Rene. "I'm not used to such a work-out before breakfast."

"Get moving," Sue ordered. "The food's not going to pop up in front of you."

At a leisurely pace they trooped through the park to the Hale garden. Rene walked ahead with Sue and Jerald while Jeffry and Gabrielle brought up the rear. As they turned in at the white gate, Jeffry observed, "Rene's putting on her feathers. Look at those legs!"

Gabrielle smiled. Dark and slender Rene. Her legs were lovely and brown below brief shorts. She looked at Jeffry, striking in his tennis flannels, buoyant and careless of mien. Here he brushed against her in the closeness of the garden path, but she might as well have been Sue for all the attention he paid her. There was no awareness of her in his manner; despairingly she thought that he would never return the love she had for him. He scarcely touched her except to help her on and off with her coat, to take her arm in crossing a street. Dancing with him, she was no nearer to him than if he held her finger-tips rather than her body. She wondered sadly if Rufus had felt this same misery over her light response to his love-making.

Gabrielle picked at the hearty breakfast Sue's trim maid served them on the terrace. Rene exclaimed over her lack of appetite, and Sue, with her usual tactlessness, remarked, "It must be love."

Jerald chuckled. "Then I'd say you weren't in love at all."

Two young men strolled into their laughter. One was Jon Bridgewater, who had fallen in love with Gabrielle long ago. The other was introduced by Jerald as Tim Carter. "Tim's our new dean of men," Jerald elaborated.

"As I've told the president time and again," Tim added, his blue eyes merry behind incredible eyelashes, "I'd much prefer to be dean of women."

Gabrielle basked in Jon's obvious admiration. He had straddled a chair beside her. "And I thought I'd forgotten you," he said in a low voice.

It was difficult for Gabrielle to carry off pretence. She answered him gently, "You have, Jon. This is just an echo. That's why we can be friends now."

Tim inquired blithely, "What's on the programme for to-day?"

"Nothing special," Jerald replied.

"Good. Planning's my dish." Tim grinned expansively. "How about a movie this afternoon, a drive somewhere for supper and a bit of dancing afterward?" He looked at Rene. "I can tell at a glance that this gal dances like a dream."

Poppies opened in Rene's dark cheeks, while Jeffry glanced at Gabrielle. "Want to go?" he inquired.

"Love to," Gabrielle replied. But suddenly eager to be away, to analyse his unresponsiveness, she prodded Rene to finish her pancakes, reminding her that they had promised to take their mother to church that morning.

Through a quick bath Gabrielle ridiculed herself for moodiness and dissatisfaction. After all, she decided, rubbing her body briskly with a towel, Jeffry wouldn't be taking me out if he didn't like me. Maybe he's slow to love after Julia. I should be glad for small favours for a while, loving him the way I do. Rufus was—— The towel crumpled to the floor and she stood slim and pink-skinned in the middle of the bath-mat. Rufus was—— And look where it got him——

Gabrielle was torn with conflicting emotions. She had refused to go abroad because of her love for Jeffry; yet where were they heading? She was standing still in her musical development, and she might be any casual girl on Jeffry's list for all the interest he showed in her. She felt poor in spirit, to be content with crumbs. Yet when she came within range of Jeffry, her emotions swept her past rationalization. What was it about him that had moved both Julia and her to such depths of love? She knew that he was less worthy a human being than Rufus, whose years of devotion had failed to touch her profoundly.

WHEN Gabrielle went to Dumas' home for her usual lesson that week she gave herself up to customary content the minute she stepped inside his door. It was a relief to drop her perplexities as if they were a cloak, she reflected, climbing the stairs. What was it in this house that gave her that release, was it peace, serenity, or merely her imagination that had created such an atmosphere?

She was disappointed to find Dumas giving a piano lesson when she entered the music-room. At the close of the lesson, Dumas presented her to his pupil.

Lambert Dorcas bowed his clipped young head before Gabrielle. "Mr. Dumas has told me a lot about you," he said. "I've wanted to hear you sing for a long time, and so to-night——" He smiled shyly at Paul Dumas.

"Lambert has written a song, Gabrielle," Dumas explained. "A song he'd like to have you sing."

Gabrielle flushed with pleasure, and waited for him to play it. She and Rufus had talked of hearing a recent concert of his at the Studio Club, but they had not been able to attend.

From the opening bars of the song, Gabrielle listened with delight and amazement. She classified the song as a prayer, yet it was like no prayer she had ever heard. Indeed, it reminded her of the *Songs of Solomon*. The music was reverent, but its exaltation lifted her heart.

"What have you called it?" she asked after the echoing amen.

"*Prayer to the Hills*," Lambert replied.

She asked curiously, "How old are you, Lambert?"

His fair skin reddened. "Seventeen."

"Gabrielle is thinking what wealth you have," Dumas told the boy. "She doesn't remember that as a child she, too, was rich in gifts."

Lambert looked at Gabrielle. "Will you sing my song? I'd like to hear what you can do to it."

"Very little that you haven't already done."

While she felt her way through the song, Gabrielle was cognizant of its extraordinary maturity, coming from one so young. Lambert swept into the opening measure. Lifting her voice in the words, Gabrielle gave his song a rich portrayal.

*Hear me, Lord God,
Let me grow to Thy hills—*

Dumas watched them both with satisfaction. He knew them intimately; had followed their progress from the earliest stages. Age, he reflected, had little to do with creative imagination. Lambert's promise was still potential. Gabrielle, at last, had found her way to maturity. How unlike and yet how alike they were! But their likeness was of Gabrielle's making, not the boy's. Here with Lambert she was as fresh and as youthful as he. Dumas had often noticed that Gabrielle seemed to have a certain unity with her surroundings. A timeless quality. Perhaps it was because she made her own terms with life. In her moments of happiness, in her deepest distress, she had a reserve of buoyancy that was a lifebelt to her mind.

Lambert was silent as she finished. Then he said, "With you singing it, any song would be beautiful."

"Your prayer is beautiful in itself," Gabrielle told him quickly.

"I'm going to do an opera. Maybe when you come back from Italy, I'll have it ready for you."

"Perhaps you'll have it ready before I go," Gabrielle said wistfully.

"Oh, no——"

And Paul Dumas echoed the boy, "Oh, no——"

"You see," Lambert began, all the warmth of his youth eloquent in explanation, "I have so much work to do. Mother wants to book me for a concert tour in October. That gets me down. I don't want to be just a flash in the pan. Besides, I want to finish high school this year. I'm on the basket-ball team."

Sympathetically Gabrielle recalled when she was at much the same point herself. She asked what high school he attended.

"Kennedy. If the tour goes through, I'll have a tutor," he added, and made a remarkable face.

Dumas' eyes twinkled. "Lambert's hair-cut is his red flag."

"But already you must find great satisfaction in your music," said Gabrielle.

"Oh, sure. But there's plenty of time. I want to do things as I want to do them."

Dumas pulled himself out of his chair. "I shouldn't worry about that. What must come to you, will come to you. It's as you do, Lambert."

The words drummed in Gabrielle's ears all the way home. They turned with the street-car wheels: *What must come to you, will come to you. It's as you do.* Dumas might have been talking to Lambert,

but it was Gabrielle he had pegged accurately. *It's as you do.* Watching the passing scenery, she adapted an old saying to her convenience, "Brood and you brood alone."

In the days that followed, her moods settled. She re-established her acceptance of the day as it was. She determined to enjoy Jeffry, and in so doing, set her heart to gaiety, and knew her love grew apace. By degrees she came to the conclusion that Rufus' problem was his own. She must not let their odd relationship influence her love or Jeffry's reception of it. With this shadow wiped out, Gabrielle went along with more enthusiasm. She worked hard at her music and took such recreation as came her way.

Not much later, Kit ran into Gabrielle and Jeffry in the Queen Anne Lounge. He joined them for a cocktail. "Where in the world have you been?" Gabrielle wanted to know, making room for him beside her. "We haven't seen you for a month."

"Oh, I've had a pregnant summer," Kit said. Then he asked carelessly, "How long has this been going on?"

Gabrielle laughed and squeezed his arm. "Since July," she answered.

Kit looked into her shining eyes and turned away. His knuckles whitened on the edge of the table. "Sue was at the surgery yesterday," he said in a clipped voice.

"Yes, I know. Rufus and I dropped in on her last night. She's looking fine, isn't she?"

"Absolutely tip top. Sue is one of those lucky women who bloom through their pregnancy." He tossed off the last of his Tom Collins. "How is Rufus?"

"Fine," Gabrielle replied. "He left for Chicago this morning. He'll be there all of September."

They urged Kit to have another drink, but he had to hurry away. As he left, Jeffry eyed Gabrielle questioningly. "I think Dr. Roberts is very fond of you," he said.

"He's been my best friend as far back as I can remember. We all adore Kit."

They reached home about seven o'clock to hear the telephone clamouring through an empty house. Gabrielle sped down the hall to answer it. Jerald's frantic voice responded to her "Hello."

"I'm at the hospital——"

"Sue?"

He was half sobbing. "She fell. Slipped on a rug. Dr. Roberts is with her now."

Gabrielle clutched the receiver. "I'll be right down."

At her elbow, Jeffry asked, "What is it?"

"Can you drive me to the South-western Hospital, Jeffry? It's Sue——"

"Of course." He grasped her arm.

But she took time to leave a note for the rest of the family. It was Saturday and there was no telling when everyone would come trailing in. She told Jeffry the gist of her conversation with Jerald. After that, she didn't speak on the short ride to the hospital. She sat rigidly, her fingers locked on her handbag. In her mind was the thought that Kit would be with Sue. The old feeling of reassurance flowed through her with this certainty.

They found Jerald pacing up and down the corridor outside the delivery room. At any other time, Gabrielle might have laughed at his appearance. His coat dragged on his arm, his tie was crooked, his collar wilted. He grabbed her hands. "I've never been so scared in my life."

Gabrielle's own panic lessened under the stress of his fear. "Don't worry," she said gently. "Kit will do everything for her."

She and Jeffry got him to sit down on a bench in the hall. Automatically, Jerald straightened his tie and smoothed his ruffled hair. He said brokenly, "She's so sweet. So funny and happy all the time."

Gabrielle bit her lip and Jeffry's hand closed tightly over hers. Afterward, she remembered the pressure of his fingers, and rejoiced in it, but at the time, the gesture was a necessity.

Hour after hour they sat in the immaculate corridor. Once in a while they talked, but most of the time they were silent, clinging to each other's hands for comfort. Jeffry's watch showed eleven-thirty when James and Mary stepped out of the elevator. Gabrielle hurried to meet them.

"How is she?" demanded James.

"Fair. Oh, I'm so glad you've come!"

"We had the others stay at home," Mary said. She was trying not to cry. "All except Julia. She hadn't come in yet."

At two o'clock, Jerald sprang to his feet. "I can't stand it. I've got to go in there!"

James and Jeffry quieted him. "That wouldn't help Sue any," James reminded him.

The baby was born at three-ten and lived a brief fifteen minutes. Kit didn't tell Sue, but when he left her to be wheeled to her room, he went into the hall to inform Jerald and Sue's family.

Jerald rushed to meet Kit. "How is she?" he demanded.

"Sue will be all right."

Jerald's hand sought the back of the bench. "And—and the baby?"

"I'm sorry," Kit said. His face was lined; his mouth taut with weariness. "The baby died a few minutes after birth."

Jerald sank down on the bench. "That God damn rug," he sobbed.

Mary and Gabrielle wept openly and James grieved over the loss of his first grandchild.

48

SHORTLY after Sue left the hospital, Kit put in his appearance at James' office and announced that he had come on business.

"Somebody suing you for breach of promise?" James asked.

Kit grinned. "Not that I know of. The fact is, I want to make a will."

"Good heavens!"

Kit parked his feet on James' desk. "You've always said that if a man had two nickels he should make a will for their disposition."

James laughed. But he refused to get down to business without first having a drink. Kit accepted a short one. The brandy glowed amber cool in the two glasses. James set taller glasses of water beside them. He picked up his drink and said, "Your health, Kit."

"Your good fortune," Kit returned the toast. Then he said, fingering the empty glass, "Our lives are never settled, are they, James?"

"How dull if they were!"

"I wonder." Kit shifted in his chair and removed his feet from the desk. "Which is the lesser of two evils—monotony or upheaval?"

James scrutinized his friend curiously. He wondered what Kit had in mind. If anyone trod an even path and coped with every problem in a capable way it always seemed to him to be Kit, who had the responsive manner of the physician and yet lived with considerable detachment and poise. The only thing about Kit that troubled James was his long-sustained affection for Gabrielle which, as she grew older, had quite visibly become a disquieting force in his life.

At last he answered Kit's question. "I'd say upheaval."

"You ought to know. God knows, you've had plenty of upheavals around you."

Kit ignored him and looked across at Gabrielle. "Will you sing for us?"

"I didn't know she sang," Richard murmured to Jeffry, who sat beside him on the love-seat.

"Oh, yes, beautifully," Jeffry replied with strained cordiality.

Dumas accompanied her, and Gabrielle sang *Jeannie With the Light Brown Hair* and *Believe Me If All Those Endearing Young Charms*. Never had he heard her do any better, Dumas thought. Her love enriched her performance.

Kit caught the thrilling quality of her voice at once and thought that the best thing he could look back on through the years was the knowledge that he had had a small part in the making of Gabrielle's destiny.

Richard was frankly astounded. "Without doubt," he said, "that is the most entrancing voice I've ever heard."

Julia was cold with resentment. Her glance travelled from Richard to Jeffry. She could read the same admiration in the eyes of each of them, but it was because of Jeffry that she suffered. Appalled and hurt, she thought, "Whatever I accomplish, she'll always be ahead of me." And for a moment she thought that she would get Jeffry back. She would show Gabrielle where her power lay. Quite visibly, every man in the room was conscious of Gabrielle at the moment, and unconscious of her. Julia seethed with a sense of unfairness.

But soon Kit, the quiet, the retiring, stole the limelight from Gabrielle. Before taking his leave, he leaned against the fireplace, his blond head slightly bent, his shoulders curiously at ease. "Interested in hearing some news?" he asked casually.

"Of course," said Gabrielle, while the others waited expectantly.

"I'm leaving for Chicago to-morrow. Elle and I are going to be married Saturday morning."

A hush settled over the room, a silence so unbearable that Richard had to break it. "Well, I suppose congratulations are in order."

Their voices rushed at Kit, eager, questioning. Only Gabrielle did not speak. She could not have said a word if her life had depended on it.

When the furore calmed down, Kit sought Gabrielle, where she sat near the windows. "Aren't you going to wish me happiness, my dear?"

She felt as if the room had fallen away from her, leaving her stranded in a strangely desolate world. From this far place, her voice reached out to Kit, "I wish you every happiness."

In their room later that night Julia looked pitilessly at Gabrielle's tear-stained face. "So Jeffry has broken the skein that kept Kit tied to you. It was high time. Rufus couldn't do it, for all the years he squandered on you. I don't know what Jeffry's got, but he certainly has influence over this family."

"But Elle. If only it weren't Elle!" sobbed Gabrielle.

"Why shouldn't it be Elle? You forget she's his contemporary, you're not. Besides, he was once in love with her. Why in the name of heaven should two men as good as Kit and Rufus waste their lives on you, Gabrielle? What does it matter to you anyway? It's your music you care about, isn't it? Men don't live for ever on a spiritual tie. I think Kit's doing the sensible thing. Maybe Elle will goad him into a more realistic outlook."

"You're a little like Elle yourself, Julia."

Gabrielle sobbed far into the night, not so much because she was losing Kit, but because she felt that in some obscure way she had shoved him unwillingly into Elle's arms. She remembered the look on his face when she told him that she had been going about with Jeffry since July. He knew that this was different from her long companionship with Rufus. To-night she felt afraid for what Jeffry was doing to her life. Julia's fierce probing had made the issue clear.

49

GABRIELLE was still overwrought as she discussed Kit with Dumas during her next lesson. She sat on the edge of the familiar yellow chair in the music-room and watched him pace up and down. She could see that he, too, thought Kit was making a mistake.

"We must stop them, Mr. Dumas," she said. "Kit shouldn't marry Aunt Elle. We must do something."

Dumas stopped pacing and stood with his back to the windows, the near and distant lights of the town creeping up behind him. "I quite agree with your point of view," he told her, "but there's nothing we can do, Gabrielle. A person's life is his own—to live as he chooses. Christopher wouldn't thank you for meddling in his affairs. Let him work out his own salvation. One thing I've learned through the years is the futility of interference."

"But it will be terrible——"

"The results aren't in your hands. Or mine. Christopher's mature. He knows what he's doing."

She was silent, her attitude one of listening. Dumas waited with her. At last she said, "You're right, of course. It was stupid of me to think I could play God where Kit is concerned. For so many years I've looked on him as a sort of bulwark in our lives. And now to think that Elle's transparent tricks have caught him."

"I think he has counted the cost and knows what he's doing," said Dumas quietly. "Perhaps he's lonely, Gabrielle. After all, you're shining for Jeffry, not for him."

Gabrielle sank into thought again, aware that Dumas was trying to tell her she was selfish about it. She was, and yet it was more than that. The thought of Kit at Elle's mercy was searing to Gabrielle.

Dumas started toward the door. "Come downstairs with me. I have a new painting to show you."

It was a quiet and lovely composition—a garden in bloom. Dumas had hung it where the light fell on it from the large diamond-paned windows. Where rain shadowed it and sunshine brushed each flower. Where darkness would give it sleep and morning awaken it.

"It was painted by a friend of mine in Italy. Which reminds me, Gabrielle"—he motioned her to a chair and sat down himself—"what about your studies with Dallini? Have you reached a decision yet?"

Gabrielle's poise was without rest. "My ambition is subservient to my—my feelings," she said slowly. She put into words what had already been understood between them. "Loving Jeffry the way I do, I don't want to leave him yet."

"Wouldn't he be here when you got back?"

She gazed at him with frightened eyes. "I don't know. I really don't know. You see, I don't know that he loves me at all. It's Julia. I may be playing a losing game. Perhaps I'm a fool. I suppose you think my career is more important than my personal happiness."

"In this case, yes, Gabrielle. Decidedly so. Of course, your happiness has a bearing on your work. Your love has had a pronounced effect on your voice. That's been accomplished. Meanwhile, your career should move ahead. You're standing still, Gabrielle. You're here in Riverside, unwilling to move this way or that. Your technique is as good as it's going to be. You're ready to burgeon forth now, but you're unwilling because of Jeffry. He may not be the one love of your life, Gabrielle. He may not even be important to you in the end. The artist is apt to have many loves. Your needs are one thing to-day, another to-morrow. I think you're making a mistake to hang around

where, awaiting the pleasure of a young man who does not love you half so well as he does your sister. I'm being brutal, Gabrielle. Deliberately brutal. I've been your teacher for a long time, and I don't want to see you take the wrong turning at this stage. Love can never be the whole answer to life when one has talent like yours. It may be strong, but it can't overwhelm the other—unless one gives in to weakness and indecision. You should move now, Gabrielle, before it is too late."

Dumas watched her earnestly as he finished, but she made no comment. Her face had the look of quiet obstinacy that sometimes contradicted Gabrielle's pliable spirit. He knew that more time would be lost before she took definite steps in one direction or the other. He felt discouraged as she left him.

Gabrielle made zealous efforts to hide her feelings about Kit until the time came for him to leave for Chicago. Right up to the moment of the wedding ceremony she hoped that something would prevent his marriage to her aunt. But it was a small hope, unfulfilled. They were married quietly and honeymooned briefly in the East. They returned home in October, and Elle became the distance between Kit's present and his past.

She and Kit stopped at the Livingstons' for a brief visit immediately after their arrival. Gabrielle, who dreaded their return as much as she had been disturbed over Kit's departure, opened the door to them. Her breath slithered against her lips at the triumph of Elle's smile.

"Hello, Gabrielle."

Gabrielle responded quietly, "Hello, Aunt Elle."

Her eyes dismissed Elle's smart yellow hat and trim grey coat. They found Kit's face. "Welcome home, Kit," she said with the old warmth.

He laid his hands on her shoulders and his fingers bit deep into her flesh. "It is home now," he said.

Gabrielle fought back tears and turned away from his hands. Without flinching, she met Elle's narrowed stare. "Come into the living-room," she said. "I'll call father. Ma's at Sue's."

Her father was changing his shirt in his room as she announced that Kit and Elle had arrived. He slid a tie under his collar and knotted it expertly, watching her face in his mirror. "Wipe that look off your face, Gabrielle," he told her sharply. "Don't let Elle see it."

Her body pressed against the door. "He isn't in love with her, father. Not any more."

James had put on his coat. He went over and laid a hand on his

daughter's shoulder. "There are many reasons for marriage," he told her. "Love is only one of them."

Gabrielle stared at the yellow and russet leaves that tapped against the window. "I suppose so," she said.

Elle's dress was yellow. It reminded Gabrielle of the leaves. Autumn—— Why, Elle was nearly as old as her father. Not that she seemed old. Rather, she looked framed. A picture, timed but ageless, striking but not appealing.

During a haphazard conversation, James said, "How are you and Sarah getting along, Elle?"

The lids drooped slowly over her glinting eyes. "We both keep our places. Sarah is a good housekeeper. I'm not."

She accepted a cigarette from Kit and bent her head to his lighter. "I've heard all about your restaurant," she said. "So much about it, in fact, that I'm almost sick of the subject. Of course, we'll be eating at the family project—if Kit can ever get any time off." She blew smoke into floating rings. "It's unbelievable how arid a doctor's life is. Why, Kit doesn't do anything but work."

"I'm not working now," he contradicted her pleasantly.

"Scraps," belittled Elle. "I don't feel as if I had a husband. Or even a life."

"My goodness, what do you expect? You've only been home a day or so," protested Gabrielle.

"Kit's been a doctor a good many years," James reminded his sister.

Behind a film of smoke, Elle's expression was unfathomable. "So he has."

Gabrielle's perceptions were suddenly sharp. "Aunt Elle, you don't mean——"

"I don't mean a thing, my dear. Not a thing."

50

OCTOBER saw Rufus at home again, too—a successful young man, but not a happy one. On his way from the depot, he stopped at Dr. Cameron's office to pick up Gabrielle. She was waiting eagerly for him at the door.

"Rufus!" She ran down the corridor to meet him and he saw at once the deepening of her dark beauty. He did not kiss her in the old

away. He merely tucked her hand under his arm and drew her toward the elevators.

"I missed you, Rufus."

The elevator doors parted, and they stepped inside. Gabrielle looked up to catch his smile, but the car was crowded and they could not talk. In the lobby, Rufus said quietly, "You look good enough to eat."

"Do I really? And here I thought you weren't even glad to see me!"

"Glad isn't the word." He added in the same distant manner, "I had to park my car in the Quincy garage. Do you want to walk over there with me?"

Driving down Truman Avenue to Tenth Street, Rufus answered her questions about his business. He told her that the Chicago office was going great guns, and from Albin's reports, the parent business was booming.

"Financially the Drake Candy Company is pretty solid," said Rufus, but his face and his voice showed no elation.

From her corner of the seat, Gabrielle studied him. The same strong, handsome features; the resolute mouth and determined chin; the laugh lines crinkling from his eyes. But there was a wall about his spirits. Stirred by her own devotion to Jeffry, Gabrielle was more sensitive now to Rufus' suffering.

"You don't seem very pleased about it," she commented.

He slowed down for a "through" street. "Why should I be?" he demanded savagely. "If I could wrap my candy in gold, I still couldn't have you."

She could think of nothing to say. Rufus spared her the need for words by remarking in an entirely different tone, "I like you in yellow, Gabrielle. You look sun-warmed."

They talked of family affairs, of Albin's fiancée.

"I saw her picture in the paper," said Gabrielle. "She looks like a pretty girl."

Rufus had brought the car to a stop in front of the Livingston house. He turned to Gabrielle with a smile. "I've never seen a pretty girl since I met you," he told her. But his cheerfulness was forced and limited. He was in a strange and ugly mood, consumed with a need to ease his feelings by tangling with Jeffry Lane.

They met unexpectedly at the Livingstons'. Rufus was waiting in the living-room for Gabrielle when Jeffry arrived unheralded. They measured each other across the hearth.

"How are you, Jeffry?" Rufus asked indifferently.

Jeffry's mouth curled. "Are you poaching on my reserve or am I poaching on yours?"

For a split second, Rufus did not answer. His face had gone white. Then he said, "In the first place, I don't like your tone; and in the second place, Gabrielle is no piece of land to be fenced between us——"

"Of course," Jeffry broke in, "you would know better than I what Gabrielle is or isn't."

Rufus' eyes were slate grey. "You know," he observed pleasantly, "I think I'm going to wipe your face right off your skull."

Gabrielle's voice stayed him. "Rufus, I'm ready."

She smiled at Jeffry as he swung toward her. "Rene told me you were here. I'm sorry, but Rufus and I are going to see *Lost Horizon*."

Rufus missed nothing about her. Not the rigid posture or the slim hands tense about her gloves. The repression of the years flared into sparks in Rufus. There were few things he would have liked better than to wallop the daylights out of Jeffry, but he could not hurt Gabrielle. He managed a smile that failed to conceal his seething emotions. "All right, Gabrielle," he said.

As he came abreast of Jeffry, he suggested insultingly, "You'll excuse us?"

"My loss this time," Jeffry said stiffly. His crooked mouth, usually curved to laughter, was grim and angry.

All the way to the Commodore, Rufus wondered how much of their argument Gabrielle had heard. When he had parked the car, he laid a hand over hers where it rested in her lap. "I'm sorry Jeffry and I nearly came to blows in your house. We might have picked a better time and place."

Gabrielle pressed his fingers gratefully. "Thank you, Rufus. Whatever quarrel you and Jeffry have is none of my business. So I'd like to be kept out of it—if you don't mind."

"Well," Rufus thought, going around the car to open the door for her, "she heard little or nothing." And doubted if he were a heel to wish she had heard it all.

But at breakfast the next morning, Larry announced, "Guess what! Rufus and Jeffry almost had a fight last night——"

"For heaven's sake! Where?" gasped Mary.

"Right here. In the living-room. I went by——"

James looked away from Gabrielle's chalk-like face. "Do you have to be such a gossip old woman?" he reproved his son.

"Oh, come on, tell us more," urged David. "A real fight!"

“ Well, sure! ” exclaimed Larry in astonishment. “ I thought you'd be interested——”

“ You might as well go on,” Jimmy said. “ What were they battling about? ”

“ They weren't battling,” said Gabrielle shortly.

Rene pointed her fork at Gabrielle. “ I'll bet it was about *you!* ”

“ They were both roaring mad,” Larry related. “ Especially Rufus——”

Julia put in expertly, “ Of course, it must have been Rufus.”

James rapped sharply on the table. “ I'd like some more coffee, Mary, before this breakfast becomes a free-for-all.”

51

BUT the matter did not end there. Within a day or two Cole, Rufus' manservant, opened the door and was confronted by Jeffry Lane. While the tall, red-headed young man walked up and down in the living-room, Cole knocked on Rufus' bedroom door.

“ Yes, what is it, Cole? ”

Cole closed the door discreetly behind him. “ A Mr. Lane to see you, sir. And if I may say so, a very surly young man, Mr. Rufus.”

Rufus tied the cord of his dressing-gown. He grinned at the elderly servant. “ No need for alarm, Cole. I know Mr. Lane very well.”

“ Yes, sir.” Cole had been with Rufus Drake Senior for twenty years, and he had returned gratefully to the Drake household as soon as Rufus had been able to rehire him.

“ Tell him I'll be right out.”

As Cole departed, Rufus rubbed his hand reflectively over his face. “ Maybe you won't know me when next we meet,” he warned his mirrored self.

He came upon Jeffry standing before the fireplace. He watched his eyes and mouth harden at his approach. He thought him an ill-disciplined young man and wondered why he should seem so attractive to both Julia and Gabrielle.

“ I don't imagine this is a social call,” Rufus greeted him.

“ Hardly. I came to offer my apologies.”

Rufus stared. Then he recovered himself and reached for a cigarette-box on the mantel. “ Have one? ”

Jeffry declined. His expression growing belligerent, he watched Rufus light a cigarette and toss the match into the empty grate.

Rufus asked slowly, "Why should you apologize to me?"

"I had no business making remarks about Gabrielle." Jeffry's voice was as starched as his shirt collar.

"It seems to me Gabrielle is the person to whom you should make amends."

Surprise lighted Jeffry's eyes. "I didn't think of that."

A flare of anger pushed Rufus. "You make me sick. Where's your guts? Mooning over a lost love and passing up the real thing. You don't deserve Gabrielle."

"And you do, I suppose," flashed Jeffry, his fists clenched.

Rufus' lips twisted scornfully. "I'd try to, if I got the chance."

"Are we going to have to fight about this after all? I thought we might be adult about it."

Rufus nodded. "You win." His gaze flicked over Jeffry distastefully. "We'll probably meet often. I'd suggest we both keep to the prescribed role whenever that happens."

He accepted Jeffry's curt nod and remained standing while Jeffry stalked out of the apartment. Then he sank into a chair and covered his face with his hands. In retrospect he regretted his inactivity. He wished he had whaled the tar out of Jeffry Lane. At least action would have relieved the pressure of his need for Gabrielle. It would have dulled the pain of her presence and the ache of her absence.

Half angrily, Rufus ran his hands through his hair. Hell, fight or no fight, the result would be the same. But remembering Jeffry's self-confident face, he thought how satisfying it would have been to have given him a black eye and a few choice bruises.

Jeffry went at once to Gabrielle. He was astonished at the courage it took to present himself before her. Did it mean so much to him that she would despise him after he asked her forgiveness for a regrettable result? Had she been, indeed, a spectator to the entire quarrel, or had she merely walked in at the end of it?

After all, it didn't make any difference what she had heard or had not heard. Why had he allowed himself to be swayed by unreasoning anger at the sight of Rufus Drake? He knew that Gabrielle saw Rufus occasionally. Truthfully, it hadn't mattered to him whom she saw or did not see. Julia still filled all his thoughts, and his envy centred on Chambers, not on Rufus. What then had aroused him? The echo of an old hurt? Had it rankled to be at a loss in front of Rufus? Since Julia had thrown him over, Jeffry's appraisal of his own

accomplishments had been scathing, and his self-satisfaction had been less marked. It did not help his esteem to realize that Rufus was the symbol of business success or that the success had been built out of nothing. As for Richard Chambers—— Well, he had found his prosperity ready-made, it is true, but he had had the wit and industry to keep it.

Jeffry found Gabrielle looking unusually lovely. She wore a dark green dress with a white lace yoke and short puffed sleeves. It gave her the look of one of the ancestral portraits that Jeffry had noticed in the Livingston home. She had a soft, intangible appeal that surprised him, for up to now he had been only vaguely sensible to her charms. Jeffry could scarcely believe how pretty she was. But it was more than herself that held him. She was part of Julia. Unlike as they were, they were of the same blood. Their similarity was a flash here and there, an expression, a movement.

He sat down on the love-seat beside her, studying her with sharpened perceptions. "Gabrielle, I've a hard thing to do——"

He did not notice her hand that went to the nosegay of violets at her throat. "Yes, Jeffry?"

"You know, of course, that Rufus and I were practically at each other's throats the other night? And you can guess why?"

Gabrielle's breath escaped softly. "You needn't be," she said. "Either of you. I told Rufus, and I'll say the same thing to you, I don't want any part of your battles. They're entirely between you and him. There needn't be any more, need there?"

Relief surged like water over Jeffry. "Very well, Gabrielle. If you're sure that's the way you want it?"

"That's the way I want it."

He smiled at her. He felt jaunty and gay again as he pulled her to her feet. "How about a movie or a bit of dancing? That's a pretty dress," he added before she could speak. "It suits you. You're an old-fashioned girl, Gabrielle. The kind for puffed sleeves and ruffles."

Gabrielle moved beside him lightly, hugging to herself the knowledge that at last Jeffry was seeing her for herself, not merely as the sister of Julia whom he had lost in such despair. If he cared enough to fight with Rufus over her, at least he knew that she existed. Long after she got home Gabrielle sat at the piano, singing softly to herself with an overwhelming sense of release from the impasse of recent months. Her resigned gaiety had turned to joy and her voice had a note of exultance.

WHILE Gabrielle's love was finding its expression in the finest singing she had ever done, Julia was walking the straight path to material good fortune. The Coachman's Inn was doing well, and Richard Chambers was always at her right hand. Whenever she could spare the time, he took her everywhere—dancing at the Brewster, the Hammond, the Steiger Café. A baked ham dinner at Crimmel's; steaks at Ben Broiler; fried scallops at the Shoreman. Long rides. Movies. But he was not only her personal escort. He was bulwark for the Coachman's as well.

"Don't kid yourself," Jimmy said over his ledger. "We wouldn't have the patronage we have if Richard J. Chambers hadn't gone to bat for us."

"Fiddlesticks!" snapped Julia. "We have a nice place and good food. People would have found us eventually, without Richard's help."

"Maybe. Maybe not. But not so quickly anyway." Jimmy glowered at her. "You don't know the meaning of gratitude, do you, Julia? Sometimes I'd like to shake your mean little head right off your shoulders. He's pushing us to the limit, and you won't even acknowledge it. What makes you tick, Julia?"

Fury brightened her like a lamp. "He seems to like my treatment."

"Bah! You're an iceberg, if I know a thing about women, and maybe I don't."

Julia thrust her face close to his. Jimmy blinked before her intensity. "Listen," she told him, "I'm not playing penny-ante. Not in this game."

"Big stuff!" scoffed Jimmy.

"You said it."

"Well, the School of Individuality taught you something, Julia. To make a solo play for what you want."

"It didn't take the school to teach me that, Jimmy."

"No. Ann Severs did that for you, darling. You're doing all right as a Beltrami girl."

Julia was secretly pleased over her handling of Richard. It was carefully gauged to get the best results with the least expenditure of emotion on her part. There were kisses and inadequate embraces.

Routine gestures, their very vagueness a bait. Julia was as skilful at holding off a man as she was at luring him on. Richard had the reputation of being hard to get. But then—so was she.

In reality she saw him very little. She made the most of the demands the Coachman's made upon her. Through the parade of months Richard grew more and more irritable at this complete monopoly of her time. "What do I have to do to come between you and this damn eatery?" he demanded.

It was a Sunday afternoon and he had stopped at the inn to take Julia for a drive. He found her at her desk, deep in menu preparations and not eager to leave her work. At his remark, flames banked the blue eyes. But she bantered, "Why, Richard, how you talk!"

Richard scowled over her food notations. "I talk as I please."

"I think you've been drinking."

"Yeah, again." Richard's fingers hesitated over a newspaper clipping about a party he had staged at the inn. His glance lifted narrowly to Julia's face. He asked casually, "Would you, by any chance, sell your virtue for this damned place?"

Julia laughed, her coolness matching his own. "The Coachman's is doing pretty well without my contribution. And besides, Richard, how old-fashioned! My virtue, indeed!"

"Am I to understand you haven't any?"

"That," said Julia, "is none of your business."

Richard's ill-humour vanished into sudden amusement. "Very well, my fine lady, I'll leave you to your career. But I'll be back in an hour, and if you're not ready, I'll burn this damn place over your head." He bowed mockingly and swung out the oak door.

53

FOR the Livingstons, work hurried winter away. The first weeks of spring saw them no less busy, but they were grateful for warmth and sunshine and longer days. The spring of nineteen thirty-eight was less harried for James Livingston than that season had been for many a year. With the inn flourishing and all the children working except David, the debit side of his account book did not over-balance his credits in such formidable figures.

James found himself absorbed more and more in the lives of his

children. "It's like reading a continued story," he thought the day Rene startled the family by announcing, "I hate to let you all down at the Coachman's, but I've got another job."

Julia gazed at her obliquely. "Oh, I think we'll manage without you."

Rene's pert eyebrows dismissed her sister's remark. "I'm going to teach dancing at Maude Renner's School of Dancing."

"Good gravy!" ejaculated Larry, looking up from the fire he was kindling in the living-room fireplace. "Are you that good?"

Watching Rene's dark, expressive face, James mused, "She's the least attractive of them all, yet she has an amazing grace. She moves as if her body were of the wind. Always has."

To say that his children sometimes astonished James would have been putting it mildly. There was Gabrielle, who clung tenaciously to an unreciprocated love for Jeffry Lane, even at the expense of her music. And Julia who measured success above her emotions. James knew they all had their problems. Even Jimmy who worked vigorously and played as forcibly; who loved lightly if at all. Larry continued to win laurels at sports and had proved himself an asset to the Drake Candy Company. David, his most thoughtful and gentlest son, was heading towards a life of creative usefulness, he felt sure. There was something stable, yet imaginative, about the boy. He was quite unlike any other member of the family, except perhaps Gabrielle.

It was Gabrielle who disturbed her father most, for he felt that if she did not solve the situation with Jeffry, her music was going to suffer greatly. She was working as hard as ever, but without direction, for she seemed to be living in a dream, a fantasy. How many times had James itched to save each one of his children from himself? As parents from the beginning of time had chewed their nails over wilful offspring.

James wondered what would happen if Gabrielle or Julia or Jimmy followed his way rather than their own? What was it his own father had said to him when he was determined to marry Mary Jones?

"Hell, James, of course she's pretty. Oh, yes, and sweet. And you want her. Well, have her. But must you marry her? She's stupid, I tell you. She'll wear the heart out of you." Well, he had married Mary Jones. Witness, these his children.

Gabrielle leaned over the back of his chair. "Why so pensive, father?"

"Pensive? Heaven forbid!"

She came around to sit on the footstool in front of him. Her hair

framed her face softly; her features, delicately but cleanly cut, had a relaxed look to-night.

"How goes it, Gabrielle?"

She met his eyes serenely. "I'm not sure, but I've been thinking very hard these past few months, and finally I've come to a decision. I can't go on waiting for ever. I've set myself a time limit. At the end of the year, I'm going to Italy. Come what may."

"Good girl!" But he thought, "This is April. A lot can happen before December thirty-first."

The knocker thundered from the hall.

"Whew!" exclaimed James. "See who it is, will you, Larry?"

"I'll go," Julia said. "It's probably Richard."

For the first time, Richard took Julia to visit his home that evening. As, arm in arm, they went up the walk, Julia's secret smile saluted the great stone house. "I'm making progress," she applauded herself, but even at this moment the thought of Jeffry intruded itself, marring her peace of mind.

Julia viewed the many rooms appreciatively. They were spacious, interestingly and tastefully furnished. They lacked the liveable comfort of the old Livingston house, the sense of history that pervaded it. But Richard and his sister and a corps of servants could never hope to give three floors of rooms a used and homey appearance.

As they returned to the main floor, Richard suggested, "Now that you've admired the upper floors properly, let's tackle the basement. If I'm not mixed up in my dates, Aileen's giving a party."

A blast of music enveloped Richard and Julia as they opened the door above the basement stairs. "I wasn't mistaken," Richard said.

The amusement room covered the entire length and one half the width of the house. An orchestra dominated one end of the room, a commodious bar the other. Between the two, at least twenty couples swung to the music.

Richard circled the crowd to search for his sister. The dancers greeted him gaily, and he saluted them in careless good fellowship. Aileen Chambers left her partner and dodged couple after couple to join her brother and his guest.

Julia watched Aileen's approach, remembering countless things she had read about her in the newspapers. "Miss Aileen Chambers heads the Charity Fashion Show." "The Little Theatre movement is under the sponsorship of Miss Aileen Chambers." "Miss Aileen Chambers finishes first in the Lake Arthur sailboat race——"

"Hello, Richard. I wondered if you'd remember." Her green

eyes, oddly slanting, brushed over Julia. "And this," she said, "must be Julia."

"The same," said Richard. "Julia, my sister, Aileen."

"I'm glad you came, Julia. Will you have a drink or do you and Richard want to dance?"

"I'll take care of her," Richard said. "Run along and see that Clarence doesn't sop up all the brandy."

"All right, Richard." Aileen had a happy laugh. "See you later, Julia."

Gradually Richard introduced Julia to the other guests. Julia did not miss their apparent interest in her. She was known.

As was his custom, Richard spent as much time at the bar as he did dancing. By one o'clock, he was drunk and very gay. He leaned toward Julia, who was idling over a Planter's Punch. "Julie-anne, Julie-anne," he sang softly, "going to shout our marriage banns."

A hush fell around the bar. Richard, highly amused, repeated his ditty in a louder voice. Julia smiled at him and laid a hand on his arm. "Do you feel like dancing?"

"Sure."

Drunk or sober, Richard danced beautifully. Julia smiled contentedly within the circle of his arm.

"We were made for each other," he told her in careful speech.

"In what way?"

"Push," he chuckled. "We've both got it."

Julia said coldly, "You make me sound mechanical."

"You are. A perfect machine. You press a button and electricity flows in given channels. But you aren't going to get away with it, my darling. Not entirely. You're going to marry me——"

"Am I?" murmured Julia.

"Certainly. When?"

She drew away from him slightly and lifted her eyes, bright and cool, to his face. "The first part of May," she said.

The next week Richard presented Julia with a square-cut emerald. Julia displayed it to the family at breakfast.

"Holy smoke!" Jimmy broke through the babble that filled the kitchen. "Why don't you sell it to the city for a traffic sign?"

James said, "So you've arrived, Julia?"

Her shoulders stiffened. "If you wish to put it that way definitely."

Jimmy drowned his pancakes in maple syrup. "Maybe. But you're just a working girl to me. If you don't quit mooning over that

green light and get to work our dear patrons won't have any food to eat to-day."

"Which reminds me," Julia said. "I want the money back that I paid for that door. I'm going to need a trousseau."

"When?"

"Before May fourth."

"Not a chance."

"I've got to have it."

"Nothing doing. We're not going to pull anything out of the business this month. We're running close to the edge after that payment we made to Rufus."

James scattered the storm. "I think it's my job to buy the trousseau."

"How can you afford to?" demanded Mary. "Have you seen the electric bill this month? And the gas bill? Besides, the windows and doors need painting——"

"Oh, I guess I'll manage," James interposed cheerfully.

Julia stared at her mother. "Not any good wishes for me, ma?"

Mary looked calmly at her eldest daughter. As usual, James had taken the matter out of her hands. There were times when she felt that she scarcely figured in the lives of her adventurous children. "Well," she said grudgingly, "you're getting married awful soon, it seems to me, but as there'll be plenty of money behind you, you won't have the hard time that I've had."

"She wants to hook him before he can change his mind," Jimmy put in quickly.

"It's a blessing he has so much money," Mary approved. She laid a plate of bacon in front of James. "Maybe he could pay you back for the trousseau——"

"Mary!"

"Ma!" gasped Gabrielle.

Mary's cheeks took on dull colour. "All of you think we're made of money."

"Oh, ma!" groaned Jimmy. "What are you grouching about now? Aren't we all doing well at the Coachman's? Aren't we almost out of the red? And now Julia's stepping into the millionaire brackets. Be thankful for something." He turned to Julia. "Come on, Mrs. Rich Britches, you're still in the grindstone class. We've got to figure out somebody to take over while you're gone."

"Gone?" echoed Rene.

"On her honeymoon, stupid." Jimmy eyed Gabrielle speculatively.

"How about you—— You could take over from six to eight or so. You know, for brotherly love and all that."

"Oh, I suppose so——under the circumstances." She smiled at Julia, who was gulping down her coffee. "I don't see how you can even think of working. I'd be in a complete dither."

Julia drew a sharp breath. "I'm not like you. Giving up a career for a foolish dream. Love and marriage will never interfere with my work."

Gabrielle sat in stunned silence. Her white face sickened her father. "That was unnecessary, Julia," he said. "If Gabrielle——"

Gabrielle laid a hand on his arm. "You don't need to defend me, father. For a little while in our lives, Julia and I had the same dream. Perhaps that's why mine seems so foolish to her now." She rolled her napkin and inserted it in its initialled silver holder. "Whatever I have or don't have, I shall never envy you your emerald, Julia."

When the children had gone, James lingered over a cigarette. He listened absently while Mary fussed about Julia's engagement to Richard.

"I didn't want to say it in front of the children," said Mary, "but he drinks too much."

James chuckled. "Not half as much as I do."

"But I want Julia——" Mary stopped, her face slowly crimsoning.

"Go on, go on," James said genially. "You want Julia to have things better than you did. Isn't that it?"

"Yes," said Mary. Then, looking at James' handsome face and thinking of what her children had done for themselves, she added thoughtfully, "But perhaps it hasn't been so bad after all."

Surprise leapt into James' eyes. "I'm glad to hear you say that, Mary. It has taken you a long time to find it out."

For some time past he had noticed a degree of relaxation in Mary. It had started with Anna Smoll's advent into the household and had become more marked with the clearing up of some of their debts. She seemed to be drifting more peacefully with the tide as she got older. Well, Mary had done the best she could with her large and enterprising family. It was not altogether her fault that she saw life through the small end of the telescope.

JEFFRY crushed the newspaper and threw it across the room. But Julia's picture and the paragraph beneath it patterned every wall.

"Mr. and Mrs. James Livingston of—south Tenth Street announce the engagement of their daughter, Julia Anne, to Richard Jonas Chambers, Jr., of Riverside. The wedding will take place May fourth."

"You fool!" Jeffry berated himself. "You fool!" All these months he had hoped against certain knowledge that she would come back to him. His arms remembered her body, the soft yielding of her flesh to his own, the compulsion of her mouth. Now that would belong to Richard; that and infinitely more.

"Why didn't I take her when I had the chance?" he asked himself in violent rebellion, remembering these moments with Julia. "I was trying to be noble and where did it get me? God!" Jeffry sprang to his feet, resolute, eager. "I'll go to her. I'll make her acknowledge her love——"

But she had acknowledged it. And calmly put it aside. Of her own free will. There was no getting away from that. It gave him no comfort to reflect on Julia's callous worldliness. Nor did it make him love her less. With unseeing eyes, he watched the traffic parade by his window. He did not know why he should realize at that moment that Gabrielle was in love with him. But there it was. The very thought of her wrapped him in comfort. In the next instant he resented the peace she afforded him. Most of all, it was her necessity that rankled. Why should it be Gabrielle who loved him when it was Julia he wanted? Why should Gabrielle give him serenity and Julia drive him to unrest?

During his friendship with her, he had scarcely touched Gabrielle—— He turned angrily from the window. "Why should I handle her with kid gloves?" he demanded of himself. "It will make no difference to Julia, and as for Gabrielle—why shouldn't she be hurt as I've been hurt?"

Old resentments grounded in his early days of hardship welled up in Jeffry. He grabbed his hat and barged out of the room. He found

Gabrielle on the back porch. She was sitting in the swing and gazing idly into the stealing dusk.

"Sit down, Jeffry."

He sat down beside her, his eyes harsh over the slender, pleasant curves of her body. "You expected me, didn't you?"

"Yes, I did."

"Why? Why should I always come to you at times like this?"

His face blurred before her. "You can answer that better than I."

"All right, I'll tell you." He swept her into his arms. "Because I want you. I need you." He peered down at her white face. His arms crushed into her. "You're completely desirable, Gabrielle."

She pulled herself away from him. The porch swing stirred to her definite movement. "I don't want that from you, Jeffry."

His anger and his anguish died in the emptiness of his arms. "I'm sorry," he said. "I must have lost my head——"

She interrupted gently, "You needn't explain. I understand."

He bowed his head over her quiet hands. "Is it too late to say I need you, Gabrielle, not for to-night, but for to-morrow? And for all the to-morrows after that?"

Gabrielle was so still the night voices seemed unbearably loud. "Are you asking me to marry you?" she said at last in a strained voice.

His laughter came, startling and discordant. "I have cheek to ask you, haven't I? What have I to offer you? You and your voice?"

She stared at him, trying to slacken the swift pace of her heart. This was not how she had wanted it to happen. Swift on the announcement of Julia's engagement. It was all too clear to Gabrielle what had brought Jeffry to her feet to-night. But over and above her wounded pride was her surge of love for Jeffry, her tenderly protective feeling for his hurts.

Nurtured lavishly on masculine protection herself, it was a new experience for Gabrielle to feel that she had the strength to help them both. "What you have to offer me," she said after a moment, "means more than what you have to offer my voice."

His mouth was a bitter line that broke thinly. "Your voice is more of you than you realize, Gabrielle. It ought to be everything."

"It goes with me," she conceded. "If my voice could be any kind of gift to you, I wish you would accept it."

It was his turn to stare at her. The pain ebbed from his face, but a shaken note crept through his words as he spoke to her: "It's

customary to return a gift for a gift. I have only marriage to give you, Gabrielle."

If the moonlight had not illumined her face, her heart would have lighted it. She said, "Thank you, Jeffry." And accepted his arms as simply, lifting an ardent mouth to his kisses. Presently she told him, "I've loved you a long time, Jeffry."

"Have you, Gabrielle?" He rested in her words. Then he said humbly, "I hope I'll be able to hear you say that for years to come."

They talked of the future, of when they should get married. Gabrielle suggested Christmas Eve. But Jeffry suddenly said, "What about your voice? Weren't you going to Italy?"

Her dreams of opera, her years of study seemed strangely distant echoes in the emotional sweep of the moment, but Dumas' face, kind and commanding, rose before her and she straightened against Jeffry with quick decision. "I am going, Jeffry. We'll both go."

"But how?"

"Mr. Dumas will lend us the money. He offered to long ago."

"But, don't you see, Gabrielle, I could never pay it back. I'm not a howling success like Chambers or Rufus." He asked almost belligerently, "You're not forgetting that, are you?"

"But couldn't I pay it back, Jeffry? After all, it's for me." She laughed and reached her mouth to his. "But think it over. Let's not burn all our bridges to-night."

She was glad Julia was asleep when she climbed into bed. She wanted this night for herself—each moment to store in memory. The room was dark, filled with spring, and beneath the whispering of the present lay the heaviness of the past. Other voices. Other loves. Other dreams.

With sleep-drenched eyes, Gabrielle bordered between yesterday and to-day. "Riches," she thought. "Riches to the end of time." And to-night the love of Jeffry seemed infinitely more important to her than the future of her voice. For the time being, her ambition was subdued; her heart alone was in command.

She told only her father. As they had done so many times, they sat in the library the next evening, the lamps brightening its cool intimacy. James heard her with grave withdrawal. He did not like the situation; he was none too keen about Jeffry.

"You're sure you want leavings, Gabrielle?" he asked.

She did not flinch. "Father, my pride is so small a thing—I want anything Jeffry will give me."

"Lord," exclaimed James, "you surprise me, Gabrielle. With the

gift you've got. Why do you want to do this? " Catching the look on her face, his tone changed. " Well, I've never had much prestige as a father," he said with a faint smile, " but any sort of father would wish his daughter happiness. And I hope you'll find it with Jeffry, my dear."

She went to him. Her hands clung to him. He stroked her hair, as he used to do when she was just a child. " You'll have to tell Rufus," he said.

" Yes," she agreed. " I'll have to tell Rufus."

That evening she wrote him a note—wrote it with regret and a strange, sick grief.

" RUFUS, MY DEAR,

I want to tell you this myself because it seems the only fair thing to do. Yet somehow I haven't the courage to come to you and say it. Will you forgive me that? You see, Jeffry and I are going to be married. I wish I could say it differently. If you will, do it differently. But I can't, Rufus. Once you promised always to be my friend and to keep our house and family as your own, no matter what happened between us. Please keep that promise, Rufus.

GABRIELLE."

It was two days before Rufus replied to her letter. Then he called her on the telephone. " I got your note, Gabrielle." His voice sounded unhurried and friendly. " I want to thank you for it."

Remorse for the years of distress she had caused him swept over Gabrielle. Until she met Jeffry she had had no conception of what she might be doing to Rufus. Her spirit had awakened slowly to realistic comprehension of what she had done.

" Rufus," she said in a choked voice, " I wish it weren't like this."

" So do I. But don't feel crushed about it. We've both known this might happen." His words scurried a bit. " Not that it makes it any easier."

" No, it doesn't," she concurred miserably. " But you won't forget

" My promise? Never. So I'll be seeing you, Gabrielle."

He saw her at Julia's bridal dinner. Contrary to custom, and merely because Richard had only Aileen to entertain for him, the Livingstons planned and gave the dinner.

" I'm glad it's going to be here," Julia told Gabrielle as they went

downstairs together. "Aileen would have given it at an hotel, and an hotel couldn't have stood up against our dining-room."

Gabrielle's thoughts kindled into pity for Julia's internally crumbling arrogance. "No matter what she says, she hates to leave here."

A hum of conversation drifted up to them from the living-room.

"I hear Bones Cardiac," Julia murmured absently. "And Jimmy. I'm glad Jimmy tore himself away from the inn to-night. He's even consented to close the place on my wedding day!"

They reached the living-room doorway. Both of them saw Jeffry's red head before anything else. Greetings rushed to them, engulfed them. Gabrielle was to remember the evening as poignantly as Julia did.

As the guests sat down at the table, James lifted his wine-glass. The candle-light touched the wing of silver in his hair. "A toast," he proposed, "to another wedding. To Jeffry and to Gabrielle! A happy Christmas Eve!"

The family as well as the guests stared and exclaimed while they rose to drink the toast.

Kit thought, "Her happiness is like a lighted lamp. She's got what she wanted—— I'm glad."

Rufus drained his glass. "I think my hands are shaking," he told himself and set his glass on the table.

For Julia the room was a sea of candles, with Jeffry's red hair bright through the flames.

55

IT was Julia's wedding day.

The old house awoke to the caress of sunshine, the whisper of the spring wind.

Julia slept late, but everyone else stirred early. At six o'clock, Gabrielle stole out of the bedroom to join her mother and Anna Smoll in the kitchen. They had breakfast on the table at seven; and when James had left for the office and Larry and David had gone reluctantly to help Rene straighten the upstairs rooms, the three women started on the wedding plans.

Jimmy came downstairs to pick up a sketchy breakfast; and immediately after he had eaten, tore out of the house. "To bring back

the groom," he called over his shoulder to Gabrielle, who followed him into the hall.

He nearly ran Sue down on the front steps. "How's the old lady?" he greeted her and sped down the walk.

"Whew!" gasped Sue. She joined Gabrielle on the stoop. "Am I late?"

"Not at all. But there's plenty to do. Come on inside."

Sue said, "I want to see all the wedding presents again. I didn't half see them last night."

The library overflowed with gifts. A goodly share of them came from friends of Richard's. Chaste and ornate silver; the choicest of china. Exquisite linens. A priceless tapestry. A deal table of warm old mahogany.

Yet the Livingstons were well represented. There were hob-nail glass lamps from Joe and Julia Livingston Wright. A hand-made hooked rug from Susan Livingston Holbrook and her husband, Andrus. From Elle and Kit, goblets that might have been spun from a spider's web.

There were gifts from business acquaintances of both Julia and Richard. And from a group of Julia's former pupils, a nightgown of floating blue chiffon.

"Typical of you," Jimmy had remarked to Julia when the nightgown arrived. "Even if you needed them, they'd never have thought to give *you* aluminium ware or an ironing-board."

Sue gloated over the lovely things. But Gabrielle hurried her from card to card. "Please, Sue! We've so much to do."

"Just think if she'd only had showers!" Sue sighed.

"She didn't want them. Anyway, if she had, she would have been walking in her sleep. She raced from luncheons to dinners as it was."

Determinedly Gabrielle steered Sue into the hall. "Where's your dress?" she asked.

"Jerald's bringing it this afternoon. And the rest of the paraphernalia."

Gabrielle took Julia's breakfast-tray upstairs about ten o'clock. Julia was sitting up in bed, idly fingering the peach-coloured hem of the sheet.

"Good morning," said Gabrielle.

Julia lifted sombre eyes. "Oh—good morning——" Her glance fell on the tray. "My, such luxury!"

Gabrielle laid the tray on her sister's knees. "You don't get married every day."

"Thank heaven!"

Gabrielle sat down on the edge of the bed. She watched Julia dig into her grapefruit. The thought of Jeffry hung between them. "Julia—you really love Richard, don't you?"

The spoon hesitated over a yellow section, then plunged into the fruit. "After a fashion."

"But, Julia!"

Julia cast a suddenly amused glance over the troubled face before her. "Suppose you let me worry about this marriage. Certainly, you don't need to. You've got what you wanted, haven't you?"

"And what you wanted but threw away," Gabrielle thought, colour springing to her cheeks.

The antagonism between them died slowly.

By late afternoon, the house was still, its occupants resting in shining order. At dinner-time bedlam broke loose in the kitchen for a little while. After a hurried meal, there was a run on the bathroom, and the rising and subsiding cadence of voices throughout the second floor.

Sue and Gabrielle helped Julia to dress—a strangely quiet Julia, who stared with vacant eyes at her reflection in the mirror. Gabrielle's accomplished fingers zipped the side-fastening of the lace dress, picked out the folds of the full skirt.

Sue handed Julia the emerald-studded combs that had been Richard's wedding gift, and Julia placed them into the smooth, high-coiled gold of her hair.

"Well," Julia said, dropping her hands to her sides, "how do I look?"

"Beautiful," said Gabrielle.

"Beautiful," echoed Sue. And almost in the same breath, "But I don't see why you didn't wear a veil. You'd have looked wonderful in one."

"I've never liked them," Julia replied. "You two had better hurry," she admonished, arranging her skirts carefully about her on the settee. "It's nearly seven-thirty."

Obligingly, Gabrielle and Sue threw off their negligees and hurried into their clothes. "Goodness," Sue said, wriggling into a shimmering petticoat, "I'm more nervous than the bride. I missed something, not having this sort of wedding."

Julia observed, "Being pregnant didn't hurt your figure much, did it?"

Sue was Julia's bridesmaid because Gabrielle was to sing at the

ceremony. When Gabrielle, brushed with magic in drifting yellow chiffon, paused before her for inspection, Julia was glad of her choice. Sue, plump and darkly pretty, offered a sharper contrast to Julia's slender blonde beauty.

After they were dressed, the three girls sat about the fireplace waiting. "The time's just creeping," Sue fretted, watching the clock hands.

"But it always gets there in the end," said Julia.

Gabrielle shot her a quick glance. What ~~was she~~ thinking—all coolly gold and ivory, the green combs glinting in her hair? Of Richard? Of Jeffry? Of herself? Was she regretful or exultant? Or was she enveloped in that curiously static condition that comes upon one in moments of stress and emotion?

Someone knocked and Larry popped his head around the edge of the door. "Here are your flowers."

Another knock and James came into the room. He smiled quietly at his daughters. "You all look lovely." He turned to Gabrielle, "You'd better go down now. It's almost time."

His smile lingered over his eldest child. "Ready, Julia?" Was that a fleeting tremor about her mouth?

Julia nodded. "All ready, father."

Downstairs, Mary looked stout in a new blue dress. Rene, graceful and singularly appealing in spite of her plainness, sat between Larry and David near the windows that faced the street.

Jimmy ushered Richard into the hall ten minutes before the ceremony. Paul Dumas played *Because* and *I Love You Truly*.

As the minister glanced at his watch and stepped in front of the fireplace, as Jimmy and Richard waited before the clergyman, he played the opening bars of Gabrielle's solo. If the guests stirred at the sound of footsteps on the stairs, if they leaned forward to catch a glimpse of the bride, if they noticed Richard's whitening face, they were suddenly swept to silence. For rising between them and the coming ceremony, heart-stopping in its joyousness, Gabrielle's voice rose in the lilting notes of *Oh, happy, happy wedding day*.

There was no time, no place, until memory wove its backward way. And to each, his own unfolding.

Sue entered the room first. Her cheeks glowed pink above the shadowy pink of her dress. Then Julia on her father's arm.

The seconds that it took her to cross the space between the door and the fireplace were life flashes for Julia. Jeffry's grey eyes. His mouth against her own. Rufus— *I've paid you back in full measure.*

Elle, her smile faintly amused. Kit Roberts, expressionless, stiff. *Not looking at Gabrielle.* Jerald Hale with eyes for no one but Sue.

Julia's hand on Richard's arm. Tea-roses spilling colour over her dress. Flickering candle-light catching the lovely smile of the first Gabrielle.

"Dearly Beloved, we are gathered together here in the sight of God, and the face of this company——"

56

ALTHOUGH the old shoes and rattling tin cans, and the "Just Married" sign on the back of the car annoyed Julia, she gave no sign. But she was glad when Richard drove into an alley and detached the heraldry of their marriage.

"At last," she sighed, as they turned on to Eighth Street, "peace and quiet."

Richard glanced at her. "Tired?"

"A little. Where's our first stop?"

He smiled. "A few hours ahead."

She watched the road slide away from them. "We're married," she thought, "and Jeffry's face was death-white——" A frown etched her forehead. "You're being melodramatic," she derided herself.

She looked at Richard, and he reached down to grasp her fingers briefly. "Well, Julia, we did it. And not a drink to down it."

"Were you scared, Richard?"

"Plenty. Were you?"

"Only for a minute." And she stared at the glistening, stretching pavement.

They spoke but little. Once Richard said, "We're in Wisconsin."

And Julia responded, "What's in a boundary line?"

"It's all United States," Richard agreed.

The dashboard clock showed two-fifteen when Richard left the highway and climbed a winding road to tall wrought-iron gates. His horn signalled musically.

"Where are we?" demanded Julia.

Richard grinned. "Still in the U.S.A."

The gates swung open, and a stocky figure crossed in front of the

headlights. Richard rolled down his window. "Good morning, Graves. I'm Richard Chambers. May we go in?"

"Oh, Mr. Chambers!" the man's voice rumbled. "Yes, sir! Go right ahead. Everything's ready for you. You know the way, sir?"

"Yes, thank you, Graves."

Their next stop was a log cabin, lighted against tall trees. "All out," said Richard.

Julia stretched cramped muscles. "Would you mind telling me——"

"Not at all. This is the guest-house of Joel Hackenridge and his wife, both very good friends of mine. It's ours for to-night."

Richard opened the cabin door to lamplight and a welcoming fire. Cushioned maple chairs and a settee flanked the hearth.

Julia sank into a chair. "Guest-house!" she exclaimed. "There are lots of people who would give their eye-teeth to live here any or every day of the week."

Richard dropped their bags just inside the door. "Don't tell me you're going socialistic on me!"

Julia smiled. "Not in the least."

Richard offered her a cigarette. His eyes were quizzical behind the flame of his lighter. "You weren't made that way, were you, my dear?"

She frowned, but a knock at the outside door drowned her answer. A trim maid entered, carrying a coffee-service on a pewter tray. "Good morning, Mr. Chambers. Good morning, madame."

She laid the tray on the maple coffee-table in front of Julia. "When you want breakfast," she said, "you can call the kitchen on the house phone."

Over their coffee, Julia asked, "Do we meet the Hackenridges?"

"They're in New York. But all this service is at their instigation."

"Who are they?"

"Who are they or what are they? Joel and Elizabeth. Immensely wealthy. They own a cereal plant, a group of chain stores, and a magnificent dairy farm. Beyond that, they're completely charming people, delightfully middle-aged. You'll see their house to-morrow. It's an old English castle with all the modern conveniences."

"Both the Hackenridges and their house sound nice," Julia said. To herself, she exulted, "This is right. This is where I belong."

A half-hour later, she undressed slowly. She relaxed in a rainbow-swirled tub, luxuriating in a hot bath. The gleaming yellow tiles of the bathroom gave her a feeling of sunshine and warmth. As she

crew a negligee over the film of her nightgown, she caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror. She paused, a sudden chill creeping into her blood.

"This is the last hour you'll be Julia Livingston," she told herself. "The last time you'll belong to yourself——"

She pressed her fingers over her eyes. Behind their shield, she fought for equilibrium. The twelve-storied department store in Riverside, the stone house and its corps of servants of which she was mistress, this very guest-house——

Her hands dropped to her sides. She smiled at her reflected face, and head high, opened the door to the bedroom.

She was propped against the pillows when Richard joined her. She marked little things: his dressing-gown in blue; his hair always so smoothly combed, never mussy. He sat down on the side of the bed, and his hands closed tightly over her chiffon-covered shoulders. She lifted serene eyes.

"Once I told you that you were mechanically inclined," he said. He smiled faintly. "But I'm going to destroy your mechanism. Do you know how, Julia? I'm going to teach you what love is all about."

After the first distaste, the climbing anger at being handled, Julia's final instinctive reaction kindled her body like a torch. Yet outwardly she was passive, her flesh a frozen casing for her pulsing blood. In the curiously still moment that followed, she thought, "It isn't Richard; it could be anyone." And remembering his words, "I'm going to teach you what love is all about."

She remembered them, too, when she awoke in the morning. Not at first. The sunshine on unfamiliar walls confused her. Then she saw the pillow where Richard's head had lain, and she remembered.

She heard him moving about in the next room. For a moment she lay still, her mind busy behind narrowed eyes. She felt oddly superior, strangely alert. How wrong Richard was. That was desire and fulfilment. It had made her a wife, but it had made her a first-class prostitute as well.

57

JIMMY sat down beside Gabrielle on the front steps. It was a warm, muggy evening, thunder and rain hovering just behind the dark.

"Dead, isn't it," Jimmy asked, "after yesterday's excitement?"

Gabrielle clasped her hands about her knees. "I've felt lost all day."
"No Jeffry?"

She shook her head. Something tight crept into her throat. Could she admit that Julia's wedding had been too much for Jeffry? She had seen his eyes on her face as Julia had stood beside Richard at the altar. Gabrielle wondered if the shadow of Julia would lie between them always.

Picking up her thoughts, Jimmy said, "I don't mean to be a meddler, but this sleight-of-hand work you and Julia have been indulging in sort of gets me."

Gabrielle's face grew paler. "You mean Jeffry and Rufus, of course."

"Of course." He fetched a sigh. "First you see one, then you don't."

"I suppose it does look queer to an onlooker——"

"Lunatic. Most girls couldn't do it and keep the edge on. But I guess you two can. Julia because she's so damned cold-blooded. You because you're so damn particular. But I'm sorry for the fellows, Rufus—yeah, and Jeffry, too. How do you think they feel about it?"

"If you're speaking of the sexual angle, don't you think they get compensation elsewhere?"

Jimmy whistled. "Without a doubt. But it isn't the same, Gabrielle. Not the same at all. I'm not saying that Jeffry, engaged to you as he is, would seek his pleasures somewhere else. After all, you're going to be married in a little while. As I see it, though, you'd no right to expect physical faithfulness from Rufus."

A flash illumined Gabrielle's eyes. "And did he have the right to expect a like faithfulness from me?"

"The answer is no. But"—and Jimmy grinned—"he'd expect it just the same. Otherwise, my child, you'd have got together on the proposition."

"Oh, I know. But it doesn't make sense. It isn't fair."

"It makes for marriage and the propagation of the race."

Gabrielle laughed grudgingly. "It just can't be argued, can it?"

"It has the same argumentative value as religion. You get nothing but a buzz in the head. And a lot of saliva in the mouth." He eased into a more comfortable position on the step. He wanted to say, "Jeffry isn't in love with you, Gabrielle. He's cock-eyed about Julia. She's a fixation with him."

But he couldn't do it. Why? Because Gabrielle knew that already. She would have to marry Jeffry and work with her heart from there.

Jimmy realized that Gabrielle was a forceful person, in spite of her gentle manner. In her quiet way, she was far stronger than Jeffry. Was her love big enough for both of them? What if some day she discovered she had ashes but no fire? Wouldn't it be better if she stuck to her music and let Jeffry go?

"You know, don't you," Jimmy said suddenly, "that Rufus is worth six of Jeffry?"

Gabrielle frowned. "Rufus is utterly fine," she acknowledged. "Goodness knows, our family has had enough proof of that. ~~But so~~ is Jeffry. Besides, Jimmy, there's that strange, intangible force that moves us to do what we must."

"Julia loved Jeffry and moved away. She knew that Jeffry would never amount to anything, and that wouldn't do for Julia."

Gabrielle remained thoughtful. "Jimmy, you've never once brought a girl to the house. It's always been Julia and I who have brought in men. Why, Jimmy? Why have you never fallen in love?"

His shoulders lifted. "Nobody ever accelerated the old heart-beat for any length of time. Besides, the set-up here gets me. Can you see a modern girl coming into this house and playing second fiddle to ma? After all, it's ma's house as long as she lives." Out of loyalty he didn't add, "And she isn't one of us." But it was surprising how thin ran her blood in their veins.

Unwillingly Gabrielle said, "You don't really have to live here."

"Oh, yes, I do. I'm superstitious. The goblins would get me if I broke off the family trail. Remember, I'm James V. I've wandered off the path enough by giving up law, you know."

They looked from the present into the past. Except for the closeness of their blood, they might have been the first James, the first Gabrielle, and trooping after them, their sons and daughters, grandsons and granddaughters, even to the present generation.

Echoing footsteps, echoing laughter. Where had they come from, where had they gone? Into new flesh, new voices, new thoughts?

Gabrielle sat on the steps long after Jimmy had left her, reviewing the years of uncertainty, work, and indecision. Julia's marriage had stirred a deep vein of uneasiness in her, had awakened doubts of the course she was following. The look on Jeffry's face had told her that one could not close the door on love. Was it enough—to pursue her career half-heartedly, to be loved half-heartedly? For the first time Gabrielle realized that one must receive as well as give. Her own love for Jeffry was warm, sustaining, but she knew now that there must be something else. She must find growth in her music, whether

Jeffry came to love her or not. In Gabrielle was born the slow realization that the forked road had been reached where she must move forward in one direction or the other. Julia had made her choice. So must she.

58

IT seemed strange to Julia to return to the Chambers' house rather than to her own home. Indeed, all Riverside was foreign. Her eyes, accustomed to new vistas—Chicago, New York, New England, Quebec—took time to adjust themselves to familiar scenes.

Her hand on Richard's arm, she walked slowly up the wide curving walk. "It's a lovely house," she said aloud. But she remembered with a sinking feeling in the pit of her stomach the brown stone house with its weathered roof and flung white shutters.

Richard delayed her at the door. "This has to be done in the approved style." He picked her up in his arms and carried her over the threshold. "Welcome home, Mrs. Chambers."

"The romantic Mr. Chambers," murmured Julia.

Richard had had a suite of rooms on the second floor refurnished for their occupancy. The sitting-room which separated the two bedrooms was decorated in apple-green and grey, and furnished in mahogany. Pale rose linen covered the love-seat in front of the fireplace, while the wing-chairs were upholstered in flowered grey chintz.

Julia's room was sophisticated. Much thought had been given to making it a suitable background for her blonde beauty. Aileen had applied the subtle touches on which Julia herself could not have improved.

"I like my room better than yours," Julia declared after a survey of Richard's austere blue and grey sanctuary.

Richard kissed the crown of her head. "I rather like yours myself," he said.

Her eyes turned away from his. Julia had no wish to deny him her bed, but Richard would never know that.

As soon as he had left for a hurried visit to the store, Julia telephoned home and got Jimmy on the wire.

"Jimmy——" To her amazement, her voice refused to function.

Jimmy responded casually. "Why, hello, bride! Hey! I said hello!"

"Yes—yes, Jimmy. I heard you. How are you?"

"Fine, but almost sunk with work. How about hurrying over here and helping me out?"

"I'll be there to-morrow, Jimmy. No, I can't to-day. Not possibly. How is everyone?"

"Okay. Except Gabrielle. She's been doing a swell job in your place, but even with just a few hours at it, she's getting that peaked look again. She can't take it."

"Well, I'll take over to-morrow. So long, Jimmy."

In the morning Aileen's maid brought Julia her breakfast-tray. "Miss Chambers said I was to serve you until you hired a maid of your own," she said. "My name is Alice."

Julia's mind stretched luxuriously. "A maid of my own, breakfast in bed——" It was good to lie and remember the early mornings when the alarm-clock jangled her awake by Gabrielle's side. But soon Gabrielle would belong to Jeffry. Her spirits dimmed at the thought. But Gabrielle would not be having breakfasts in bed or a maid to wait on her, except through her own efforts. Jeffry, who drifted from job to job, could never give her that.

"Would you like me to help you dress, Mrs. Chambers?"

Julia hesitated over Alice's question. "No, thanks. But you can lay out my things. The grey suit and the violet accessories."

As she dressed, Julia wondered, "Will they think I've changed? Can they see the difference between Julia Livingston and Julia Chambers?"

They didn't appear to notice. Mary kissed her with quiet affection. "I'm glad to see you, Julia. I'm anxious to hear about your honeymoon, but you're terribly late. Jimmy left ages ago. You'd better dash down to the inn right away or I won't answer for the consequences."

As she opened the door to the Coachman's, overwhelming nostalgia gripped Julia. "This is mine. This is where I belong."

Jimmy pushed aside the papers on the desk and stood up to shake hands with Julia. "How's the girl?"

"Never felt better."

"Good. Pull up and get busy."

"Really! Not one word as to how I look! Not a single question about my trip!"

Jimmy propped his elbows on the desk. "You look great," he said coldly. "You said you felt fine. As for your trip, you can tell us about it to-night. Beverly's taking over after dinner. Check over

these menus, will you? We're having a bridge luncheon this noon. A business-men's dinner to-morrow night that will take up all of our available space. And I've got a stack of paid bills that have to be entered this minute."

"Thank heaven, they're paid."

At six o'clock, Richard came into the Coachman's for dinner. He found Julia outwardly serene, inwardly abstracted. He saw at once that he had failed to remove her from the Livingston influence. It was in her bones as well as in her mind.

"Hello, Richard. Please don't ask me how I feel or even talk to me till after dinner. I'll be more human then."

Richard laughed. "Mum's the word."

After eating a hearty dinner he left; but he returned at eight-thirty to pick up Julia. She and Jimmy, however, were unable to leave the inn until nine o'clock. On the drive home, Julia had the same feeling that had come over her when she returned to the Coachman's—lost, stripped of the trappings that were essential to her. Both her mind and her heart told her that nothing would ever be the same again. Covering the family hall, she wondered if Jeffry would be waiting in the living-room.

He was not there. Only the family welcomed her, with laughter and sparse kisses and many questions. In the midst of the confusion, she had a moment of terror. She wanted to scream at everyone to be quiet. She wanted to cry out to Richard to take her home. But what she wanted most—in anguish and desolation—was Jeffry Lane.

59

THE first anniversary of the Coachman's was celebrated on a Sunday. The inn was crowded with customers who waited in line for superb dinner planned by Julia.

"Just think," she remarked as Jimmy locked the door after the last two patrons, "in just a year, the Coachman's has become quite an institution."

Jimmy twirled his key-chain like a lasso. "And your marriage, Mrs. Chambers, buttered the Coachman's bread pretty thick."

Julia's face darkened, but almost at once her expression cleared. "But it's ours," she exulted. "Nobody else owns a dime of it. Except for what we owe Rufus——"

"*Pride and Prejudice*," said Jimmy. His eyes were sceptical upon her. "It's comparatively easy to pay back borrowed money. It's the intangible gifts like Richard's that you can never repay."

A chill prickled Julia's skin. Angrily she thrust back her shoulders. "You'd better hurry," she advised. "Richard will be here any minute."

The Livingstons had supper with Julia and Richard that evening. Sue and Jerald were also invited. They admired the blue and ivory dining-room, but in secret each one preferred the candle-lit room at home. Here, through a long, perfectly served meal, the atmosphere lacked the careless geniality of the Livingston suppers.

While they were having their coffee in the drawing-room, Julia told Gabrielle, "The thing I dislike about being married is having to leave home. I miss the house and all its noise and bustle."

"I suppose I shall miss it, too," said Gabrielle wistfully, thinking that in spite of all the interruptions and distractions while she studied, it had a heart-warming quality that she would never find in any other setting. "I think father's had a lot to do with that," she added.

Gabrielle admired Julia's classic white chiffon dress and her high piled hair. "You look simply grand, Julia, and this is your proper background. But don't you find it harder to cope with than our place? All these servants? All these rooms?"

Julia answered, "In spite of it all, it's empty."

Aileen sauntered into Gabrielle's aghast silence. She said, "I hope you're going to sing for us to-night."

"Of course, if you'd like me to."

"We certainly would. But, tell me, how does your family rate all the talent? Look at us——"

"Yes, just look at you!" echoed Gabrielle.

Later Richard cornered Gabrielle. "Now that I'm practically your brother, I think I can speak safely——"

"Haven't you always?"

"Well, I rather thought so, until I got into this family. Now I'm never sure. The thing is, Gabrielle, I'd like to send you abroad. To study. Wait. Don't say anything yet. It would be my pleasure. The money itself means nothing to me."

"Richard, you're a dear," Gabrielle said with a rush of warmth. "But I couldn't let you. And Jeffry wouldn't."

"Oh, I shouldn't let Jeffry stand in my way," said Richard quickly. "Don't make that mistake, Gabrielle. You're following the wrong road now with that voice of yours. Seriously, it's a wonder, and you

ought to do something about it. You'll go stale, Gabrielle, if you keep on as you're doing. You've got to grow with a gift like yours."

"When you love someone, Richard, you'll let that person do almost anything to you."

The strain deepened in Richard's eyes. "Right, Gabrielle. It's too bad, but you're so damnably right." His glance rested on Julia, who was deep in conversation with Jimmy, making fresh plans for the inn.

But Richard did not let the matter rest there. He called on Jeffry at his boarding-house and bridged the coolness between them abruptly.

"I came to see you about Gabrielle," he said, and explained about the offer he had made to her. "You can't stand in her way, Jeffry. Five thousand dollars isn't much to me, but to Gabrielle it will mean the fruition of all her efforts—success in opera. Can't you see that she's standing still now, and the years are passing by? You know how she's slaved for this. It ought to be hers. And she won't have to worry about paying it back. Whether she realizes it or not, her voice is bigger than she is. It's going to take her farther than she knows."

Jeffry broke matches into small pieces. He had to cover his resentment toward Richard, who had Julia, who had money, who had power and capacity. "I'm small," he said, "but not that small." He held out his hand to Richard. "I'll talk to Gabrielle right away. To-night."

With sombre eyes, he watched Richard walk out of the house and down the steps.

When Jeffry reached the Livingston house Gabrielle was practising the magnificent *Komm Hoffnung*. Although he entered the room quietly, she stopped singing and turned from the piano.

"Oh, Jeffry! I'm so glad you came. Everyone's gone, and I was feeling sorry for myself."

Jeffry sat down beside her on the piano stool. "Go on singing. It was glorious."

She shook her head. "I'd much rather talk." Her gaze searched his face. "Is something the matter?"

"Richard came to see me. He told me about the money he wants to give you."

Gabrielle drummed out *The Farmer in the Dell*. "I wish he hadn't."

Jeffry's hands seized hers to stop their restless playing. "I'm glad he did. You mustn't refuse because of me, Gabrielle."

She said honestly, "I didn't entirely, Jeffry. I don't like to be indebted to anyone and this is a major gift."

He kissed her. "Remember, Gabrielle, you told me once what you had in your heart about going to Italy. Well, if you want me to go, I'll be glad to go with you. There are things I can do. I won't be dead wood while you work. I know I've got to be a string to your kite sooner or later, for I'm a prosaic fellow, as you know, and you have a wonderful talent. Think over Richard's offer, Gabrielle. Accept it. I beg you to."

For a moment Gabrielle could hardly speak. She knew what it had cost Jeffry to come to her with benevolence from Julia's husband. She knew the hurt to his pride. And how would it be in the future, with Jeffry standing by while she worked, studied, sang, progressed? What man could endure it? Even if she had his love, it would be a strain.

She leaned her head against his shoulder. "Thank you for offering me this, Jeffry. If you wish, I'll think it over."

When she went for her usual lesson to Dumas on Wednesday evening, she laid the whole problem before him. He leaned back in his chair. His mind held her like a prism. At last Gabrielle had come to a decision that demanded a definite yes or no. He rejoiced secretly, for he was beginning to despair about her future.

Dumas had grown more grey in the years since Gabrielle had come to him, eager, untutored. But he was no less buoyant of spirit, no less hopeful for his pupils. Life had mellowed but it had not chastened him. He knew now that he must point the way for Gabrielle. He wished that Jeffry were not in the picture. He had served his purpose. He had brought her to life. But now he would dam her spirit, if the acid of pride bit into his own self-respect.

"Gabrielle," said Dumas, "there isn't any question about what you should do. I'm glad the chance has come. You wouldn't accept my offer. That was stupid. But now it comes from your brother-in-law. Go, Gabrielle, go now, before you grow older, before you grow tired, before you lose yourself in Jeffry. He says he will go with you. Well, let him go. The husband of an artist must stand aside and see his mate soar beyond him. I don't think Jeffry will mind. He's not ambitious. That's all to the good. Meanwhile, you will have your love. You will have your work, too. A good combination, if you can keep the balance steady. If you handle it wisely, Jeffry need not suffer. He is interested in music himself. He might do something with you—as Marianne did with me. Think along those lines, Gabrielle. As for the money, there is one way of giving you've never learned—to

accept giving. Your pride is high. Oh, yes, you accept things, but only if you can give as much as you get. But you must realize that it's a pleasure for others to give, too."

Gabrielle looked at him long and deeply. She glanced around the room, which was woven into her thoughts like the roles she had sung within it. "Mr. Dumas," she said, still with the manner of a pupil to her teacher, "I've learned much more than music from you. Sometimes I think I've learned to live in this room."

When Gabrielle reached home, she came upon her father in the living-room. He was reading. He laid aside his paper at once when he saw that she wanted to talk to him. She sat down on the footstool and tucked her chin into her hands. "I want your approval on something," she said. "Richard wants to give me five thousand dollars for my year abroad."

James stared. "You mean—loan it to you?"

"No. He wants to give it to me."

"Let me catch my breath. Five thousand dollars!"

"I said no at first. But so many things have happened to make me change my mind." While James listened attentively, she told him the whole story.

"So Jeffry wants you to take the money," James commented. "That must have been hard for him. But I'm both surprised and pleased. If he can stand it, why can't you?"

He was silent a moment, remembering Gabrielle's years of effort through all the hustle and bustle of their family life. He knew that this would switch her course completely; that it would give her marriage a dubious start, since it put Jeffry in a difficult position at once. But Jeffry was the sort who could take it. He was not consumed with pride. Better far if he could step out of Gabrielle's life completely now, thought James. But since he was so important to her—

"I think it's the sensible thing to do, Gabrielle," he said. "The only thing to do. Miracles aren't to be thrown away. It seems to me that both your voice and Richard's offer have the quality of miracles."

Her father's judgment was final. Gabrielle sat in silence, staring at the painting of Gabrielle Le Duc, her thoughts climbing strange stairways.

IN August Kit told James over a couple of Tom Collinses that he and Elle were going abroad. He was going to loaf for a while, see heather in Scotland, fog in London. Then, more cautiously, he disclosed that he had considered giving up his practice.

James was stunned. "Is this Elle's idea?" he asked with certainty.

Kit shrugged. "Does it matter? Anyway, I'm not going to do it. I've been at it too long. And a man must work."

"You would never be happy away from your profession until you're too old to practise, Kit."

"Perhaps that's it."

At the dinner-table that night, James relayed Kit's information to the family. Gabrielle, her face drained of colour, laid down her fork. "That's Aunt Elle's doing," she said. "I knew—when they first came back—that she was going to try to get him to give up his work."

"Well, he didn't do it," James said. "But she'll probably keep at him till he does."

"A red-headed vamp," declared David, now grown to thoughtful adolescence.

"Shrew!" snapped Jimmy.

The Roberts left for New York on the tenth of August. Gabrielle did not go to the station to see them off. She could not. Farewell had become a terror to her. But the night before his departure, Kit stopped at the house for a brief good-bye. He talked to Gabrielle alone in the library. "I've only a few minutes, but I couldn't go without seeing you," he said.

She was slender and lovely and indescribably dear to Kit. He saw that she was crying. "Gabrielle," he said, "tears, when I came for your laughter. I need courage, not grief."

"It seems as if the people I love are always going away from me," sobbed Gabrielle.

"People you love?" He smiled sadly. "But this won't be for ever. I shall be back for your wedding."

She wiped her eyes with a yellow handkerchief. "Why am I crying now?" she wondered. "This isn't his real good-bye. He left us all the day he married Aunt Elle."

Her tear-stained face restored her to her childhood. Kit said,

"Gabrielle, you remind me of the day we visited Winston together!" She smiled suddenly. "I must have been a dreadful child."

"You were always what you are. That's basic, my sweet." He took her hands.

She cried in panic, "Don't say good-bye to me, Kit. I couldn't bear it."

He bent to her mouth and touched it lightly with his own. "I'll be seeing you, Gabrielle."

With her hands pressed against her lips to still their quivering, she watched him go. Tall and broad and vital. The lamplight slanting across his blond head.

A few days later he and Elle sailed for England. They reached London in the dark days of the war scare. Elle hated the encroaching gloom. "This isn't the England I remember," she remarked petulantly.

At home, during the suspense of September, with the radio and the newspapers couched in war headlines, Gabrielle longed for them to come home. Slowly it dawned on her that her own plans were in jeopardy. On a Sunday morning, while he accompanied her to church, Dumas quieted her fears.

"Look, my dear, it's autumn. Clear and colourful. There's no darkness here. But peace can't come if you cry war. There is no greater medium than the spoken word."

Gabrielle thought that he was not being realistic. But his explanation caused her to wonder if his was not the real world and hers one of shadow.

"We're just one person, you and I, Gabrielle. But all over the earth we make an enormous company. War is a conflagration. Why shouldn't peace be the same thing if we give it propaganda?" So she stilled herself, and in church, as countless others knelt all over the land, lifted a prayer. "My peace I give unto you."

Lambert Dorcas gave her another peace-offering. He arrived at her home in a breathless state to tell her that he was playing his own song over the radio the following Sunday night and that he wanted her to sing it. Gabrielle was taken by surprise. In the morning, she took an hour off from the office and accompanied Lambert to the radio station. She auditioned before Nicholas Hatter, president of the Vale-Hatter Company, sponsors of the Sunday peace programme. She was a little nervous, but fright slipped from her as she sang Lambert's song.

Mr. Hatter didn't waste words. He said, "The job's yours, Miss

Livingston. I'll pay you fifty dollars for the performance."

The Livingstons were in an uproar over Gabrielle's radio début. "This family!" exclaimed Jimmy. "Always jumping from cliff to cliff."

"Well, there's no yawning in mid-air," said James.

Gabrielle had never looked lovelier than she did on the night of the broadcast. She wore a simple black gown, her only ornament a heavy gold cross on an equally heavy chain, both of which had belonged to the first Gabrielle.

There was no studio audience. For this she was grateful. Strangely enough, she had no desire to have Jeffry present. He had not been enthusiastic about her broadcast. Gabrielle was at a loss to understand why he should wish her to go abroad to study, yet resent her singing on a radio programme. Why couldn't he have reacted as Rufus had? Just before dinner, Rufus had called her on the telephone to wish her luck, and to say that he would be listening to her.

But Jeffry had taken her to the studio, pressed her hand, and said, "I'll have to dash to get to your house in time. Shall I pick you up here?"

"No," Gabrielle replied, vaguely upset by his attitude. "Wait for me at home. I'll take a taxi."

As she took her place at the microphone, she had the old topsy-turvy feeling in the pit of her stomach. She had not experienced it at all during her rehearsal. She glanced at Lambert. His smile flashed eagerly. She saw that his eyes were glowing. Before such utter belief, her nerves steadied.

The announcer bent to his microphone. "The Vale-Hatter Company, makers of Blue Label coffee, presents the Pause for Peace, featuring Lambert Dorcas at the piano and Gabrielle Livingston on song. Mr. Dorcas' first selection will be his own composition *Prayer to the Hills*, with vocal rendition by Miss Livingston."

To skilled accompaniment, the stirring words soared from Gabrielle's throat. If her voice had been good at rehearsal, it was matchless now. To Gabrielle, this song was a personal, as well as an inclusive, prayer. It was for all the world, but it was also for Kit, close to war's threatening shadow; for her brothers; for Jeffry and Rufus; for Sue's husband and Julia's. It was for the sons she expected to have some day, for the daughters who would rear other sons to tall, strong living.

The comments that followed the "Pause for Peace" programme were like waves that washed a hither-to quiet shore. Nicholas Hatter

offered Gabrielle and Lambert a thirteen weeks' contract covering exclusive radio appearances.

Gabrielle thought it over and then declined regretfully. She smiled at him, and his hard, lined face softened against the sting of her refusal. "I'm very sorry, Mr. Hatter, but I've already made other plans," she told him. "You see, I'm going to be married the last of December, and after that my husband and I are going abroad. I intend to study in Italy."

"Study!" snapped Hatter. "Study! What d'you need to study for? Never heard such a voice in my life." He tapped a huge stack of letters on his desk. "Look at these. All of them requests for you to sing *Prayer to the Hills* again. And you want to study!"

"It must seem pretentious of me, but ever since I was a little girl I've wanted to sing opera. I still want to." Her eyes twinkled. "You might compare me to your coffee. You don't want to make just good coffee. You want to make the best coffee there is. Well, I don't want merely to sing opera. I want to sing it in the very best manner."

"Hmmm——" He eyed her speculatively. "What if there's a war?"

She looked away from the certainty of what Lambert's song had meant to him. "Shall we hope there isn't a war?"

He grunted. "Hope and Hitler. Sounds phooey to me, Miss Livingston."

She compromised. "If there is a war, and your offer still holds good, I shall be glad to sing for you."

He shrugged. "You know how it is, Miss Livingston. There are always other singers."

"I hope my refusal doesn't affect Mr. Dorcas' contract."

"Hardly. Mr. Dorcas and I can be useful to each other. Without that, he has a managing mamma to look after him. I'm a good business man, but that woman"—he drew a deep breath—"that woman!"

Gabrielle left his office, wondering if perhaps the microphone and not grand opera would be her destiny now. The flame of war was whipping along the horizon. Perhaps she had waited too long. Uncertainty deepened within her as she arrived home and found Jeffry waiting for her. Jeffry, who in spite of her burning love for him, gave her none of the reassurance she got from Rufus or Kit.

THE cablegram dropped from Gabrielle's fingers. Larry picked it up from the floor. While Gabrielle sank into a chair, he read in a gradually stumbling voice:

"Kit killed in automobile accident. Returning home.

ELLE."

The ticking of the grandfather clock in the hall sounded loud in the living-room.

Gabrielle said, "I don't believe it." She was white, without tears.

But it was true. For Elle was returning to Riverside with Kit's ashes for burial. War had been averted in Europe. But Kit had died. These thoughts tramped through Gabrielle's sleepless mind.

An immediate letter from Elle supplied the details. Kit had hired a car to take him from London to Canterbury. Elle had had a headache and had remained in the hotel. Kit's car had blown a front tyre half-way to Canterbury and swerved into an oncoming lorry. Both the driver of his car and Kit had been killed instantly. The driver of the lorry was unhurt.

Not even Jeffry could comfort Gabrielle. The thought was unbearable that Kit, who had always helped other people to live, should have died in this sharp, harsh way. Instinctively she blamed Elle for taking him away, for causing his death. She was consumed with pain.

After watching her for a while, Jeffry asked slowly, "Were you in love with Kit?"

For the first time, Gabrielle was furiously angry with him. "I've always loved Kit," she stated evenly. "I was never in love with him." But her desolation overwhelmed her anger. "If I could only stop thinking about it," she said, her voice matching her tight, pale face. "If only for a minute!"

In dismay, James called on Dumas to help her. He had long realized that Gabrielle depended on her teacher a great deal.

"Perhaps I can," Dumas agreed. He laid a hand on James' shoulder. "I wouldn't worry too deeply. Gabrielle's spirit will surmount her grief."

When she telephoned to postpone her voice lesson, he insisted that she keep the appointment. She protested that she could not sing a

note. But he assured her that she need not sing. They would only talk.

She went reluctantly. Dumas gave her a chair in the living-room, close to the fire. He sat opposite her, and urged her to speak of Kit.

"How can that help?" she asked.

Dumas' heart ached for her. "My dear, Christopher was my friend, too, and I miss him intensely. But why let despair take hold of us?" He stared into the crackling fire. "Do you remember when I told you about my wife?"

Instinctively Gabrielle glanced at the crayon portrait of Marianne Dumas. "I remember."

"And my release of her after she died?"

Gabrielle nodded.

"Then perhaps you will agree with me that Christopher, too, had completed his destiny here."

She said wonderingly, "You're not afraid of death at all, are you?"

"Not at all. Are you?"

"I wasn't before Kit died. But I am now. Desperately afraid."

"Why, Gabrielle?"

"Striking like that—for no reason——"

"There's a reason for everything. And a quick death is merciful. As Christopher lived. Is there any reason to suppose that because a door opened and closed suddenly for Christopher that behind the door is the dark?"

She pressed tight fingers against her temples. "If I could believe that!"

He had Sadie bring them hot chocolate. It seemed to Dumas that Gabrielle's mind stretched and eased over the steaming cup. After a while he told her that he had heard from Dallini that morning.

Her face lighted. "What did he say?"

"That he would expect you the first of the year. He says, indeed, that you and Jeffry may have a small cottage on the edge of his garden. I remember that cottage. Marianne and I lived in it one summer."

"Oh! I'm sure I shall love it."

For the first time since Elle's cable arrived, Gabrielle slept without waking during the night.

Kit's burial services were conducted at a funeral chapel. Gabrielle sang his requiem: *I know that my Redeemer liveth*. If she never sang again, the tribute her voice paid to Kit would have fulfilled its mission. Into the hearts of the men and women who crowded the

chapel in memory of Christopher Roberts, the song flowed majestically and flowed in faith. And in this last song, Gabrielle gave Kit his freedom.

A few days later James read Kit's will to his family, to Elle Roberts, and to Kit's aunt, Sarah Vail. Kit's accumulated wealth amounted to five thousand dollars in cash and two thousand in mining stock. He left four thousand dollars to Gabrielle Livingston; the mining stock and one thousand dollars to Sarah Vail. He made no mention of his wife.

The group in the library breathed as a summer wind moves through the trees. Julia caught a glimpse of Elle's thin, tense mouth and thought, "Kit evened the score between us, my good aunt."

Her anger controlled to frigidity, Elle turned to Gabrielle. "I hope you'll enjoy his money." Her fury lashed briefly. "His wife and his love were evidently some years apart." She stalked past her niece into the hall.

Richard's hand closed over Gabrielle's shoulder. Already he had become a supporting presence to the family. "Forget it, Gabrielle. 'Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned.'"

Sarah Vail avoided Gabrielle. She had always resented her for the effect she had had on Kit. At Kit's apartment, she said bitterly to Elle, "She robbed me."

Elle stared at her with surprise. "Robbed you? What about me?"

"You don't need the money."

"I wasn't thinking of the money."

Sarah removed neat gloves. Her large eyes were dark with hate. "We could contest it," she said.

Elle's lips curled. "That would be a waste of time and money. Neither Kit nor James was fooling when that will was made. Kit knew just what he was doing."

Sarah's fingers twisted and untwisted the clasp in her pocket-book. "Will you stay here?" she asked.

"Here!" Elle laughed harshly. "I'm leaving as quick as I can pack." She started for her bedroom, but paused in the hall doorway. "What will you do?"

"That all depends whether you keep this apartment or not."

"I will until the lease runs out." Her head lifted defiantly. "Then you can store the furniture. I'll pay you for your trouble."

Sarah stared at her disappearing back. "I hate them both!" she thought with suppressed violence.

Elle made quick work of folding up the signs of her occupancy in

her bridal home. Again a widow, older now, she must plan carefully for the future. She knew with certainty now what she had always suspected, that Kit had married her when he had seen Gabrielle irrevocably in love with Jeffry. His silence had covered the message so clearly spoken in his will.

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AS Gabrielle turned the calendar on the dressing-table to December twenty-third, a brisk fist tattooed on her door. It was Rene, her dancing feet moving with decorum. "Gabrielle," she called, "Rufus is here."

Rufus! Gabrielle's mirrored reflection had a startled look. "Tell him I'll be right down," she said.

She joined him in the living-room, where he seemed to belong as if he were one of her brothers. The fire was dead in the grate. David, who had succeeded Larry as fire-tender, had not yet made his morning rounds. David, who went about his chores with dreamy indifference to time, had none of Larry's speed and zest in the trivial. His days were filled with the weaving of designs, of mechanical wonders on papers. All his thoughts were centring on engineering.

"I hope I didn't get you out of bed," Rufus said.

"Not quite." She smiled at him, thinking how little she had seen of him since her engagement to Jeffry and how much she had missed him. "But you're an early visitor, Rufus."

"I had to be. I'm leaving this noon for Chicago."

"Chicago! But Rufus——" She laid a hand on his arm. "You're not coming to my wedding."

He looked at her unbelievably. "Did you think I would?"

Suddenly she was frightened with a fear that amounted to panic. "Rufus, I can't. He doesn't love me—not enough——"

He said through stiff lips, "You wanted this, Gabrielle."

She turned away from him and went to the windows. The curtains, the windows flecked with snow, framed her body. "Am I wrong, Rufus?"

"You have no right to ask me that."

Silence in the lovely old room. The Christmas tree presented a shimmering silver front to a chill grey day. Rufus glanced up at the

first Gabrielle, winced at her serenity. From the windows the other Gabrielle's voice came low, uncertain, "You'll be going away for long?"

He said drearily, "No, I'll be back. This is just a vacation."

She left the windows and returned to him. "I'm not afraid any more, Rufus." She held out her hand to him. "We've been friends so long. When I come back, I shall be glad to know you're here, too."

He bowed a white face over her fingers. He felt that he had travelled a long way in suffering with this dark-haired girl who exacted so much from him, even on the eve of her wedding to someone else. "I hope you'll be very happy, Gabrielle."

She followed him to the door, watched his tall figure stride down the walk, heard the gate click behind him. Kit. And now Rufus. Abruptly she shut the door—"Why is the house so still?" she thought, with a stab of pain. "Where is everyone?"

She prowled from room to room. The library was deserted. In the kitchen, Anna Smoll was baking cookies. Soon the telephone began to ring and the knocker to clatter through the house. Packages were delivered—some of them Christmas presents, some of them wedding gifts.

Unwrapping a tablecloth and napkins from Dr. Cameron and his wife, Gabrielle sighed, "They'll just be packed and put away again. This isn't really like getting married. No house hunting, no curtains to buy——"

The telephone interrupted her thoughts. It was Jeffry. "Hello, Gabrielle. Getting scared?" he asked.

She laughed. "Not yet. But we're getting lots of presents. Wait until you see them!"

"I'll be over for a few minutes to-night. By the way, when's Jimmy leaving the inn?"

"As close to eight as possible."

She had barely hung up the receiver when the 'phone rang again. This time Julia announced smoothly, "I'm not working at all to-night. So I'll be over early."

"I'm glad, Julia. Come as soon as you can." She did not add that she felt the house alien and empty around her without the vitality of its many occupants. At noon Gabrielle experienced a flood of desolation. "Rufus is leaving," she told herself, and felt her heart squeezed as if by hands. "It will never be the same when we meet again."

Jeffry stopped at the house before going on to his bachelor dinner.

He kissed Gabrielle with brief tenderness. "Just think when I'll see you next!" he said.

Coat over his arm, hat tipped rakishly over one eye, Jimmy tore down the stairs. "Hold 'em, cowboy," he yelled, and pulled up in front of Gabrielle. "Whoever heard of a bachelor dinner without the best man?" He grinned at Gabrielle. "After this, I'll have to draw the line. You know the old saying, 'Three times a best man, never a groom.'"

The knocker announced the arrival of Julia and Richard. Their arms were loaded with packages. Jimmy bowed them into the hall. "Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus."

Richard transferred his packages to Gabrielle's arms. "Just in time to leave again," he said. He kissed Julia, and Gabrielle's breath caught at the tightening of Jeffry's mouth. So even now it was like that—but surely, surely, not for ever——

Before going, Richard laid a long envelope on top of Gabrielle's packages. "With the best wishes of Mr. and Mrs. Chambers." The door banged behind the three men.

"Let's get rid of these presents," Julia said, leading the way to the living-room.

They laid the packages, gay with ribbons and seals, under the tree. Gabrielle opened the envelope and took out Richard's cheque for two thousand dollars, together with a brief note:

"Please accept this even if you won't need the rest of the offer. The other three thousand are in reserve—yours for the asking.

RICHARD AND JULIA."

Gabrielle folded the letter. "Thanks, Julia," she said slowly. "I don't know why you and Richard should be so generous when Jeffry and I already have more than we need."

"You haven't got Kit's money yet, have you?"

"No. But I only wanted this two thousand as a loan."

Julia slipped out of her coat. "Well, don't thank me, thank Richard. I think it's all foolishness."

Gabrielle's mouth tightened.

"Now don't get mad. You know very well what I think of this opera idea. I've told you for years. And I don't see any reason to change my opinion now. The money was Richard's idea. He didn't consult me about it. Or you probably wouldn't have it now." She held out the mink coat to Gabrielle. "How do you like my Christmas present?"

"Why—it's lovely. From Richard?"

"Who else?"

Gabrielle touched it softly. "I noticed it when you came in."

Julia's smile matched the silky lines of the coat. "Me and Aunt Elle," she said. Her smile faded. "It will seem strange—Kit's not being here for your wedding, Gabrielle."

Gabrielle said quietly, "Kit will always be alive to me, Julia."

Julia caught back the words: "Kit was always in love with you." And wondered why she was kind to Gabrielle at such a time.

She asked abruptly, "Did the chauffeur bring our over-night bags?"

"This afternoon. I put them in the guest-room."

Mary appeared, carrying a cup of coffee. "Hello, Julia." She eased into a chair. She was glad to see the signs of prosperity in her eldest daughter. Julia had done all right for herself. "Do you girls want some coffee? I just made some fresh."

"I could go for a cup," Julia said. "How about you, Gabrielle?"

"With pleasure."

They ate some of Anna's mincemeat cookies with their coffee. "I shouldn't do this," Julia sighed, reaching for another cookie. "I'll be getting fat."

"Not much danger. Not the way you work."

"By the way," Julia said, "is Larry getting in to-night or in the morning?"

"He's leaving Duluth at four a.m."

"I hope the roads are good."

"Good or bad, Larry will make it. He just talks to that old bus of his and it purrs along."

"He's doing all right for Rufus, isn't he?"

"I should say he is," said Gabrielle. "And finding time to skate and ski, too."

Julia held out her cup, and Gabrielle filled it again. "Since we won't be able to sponge on you for a long time," Julia said, "we hired a pianist this morning."

"Good! For lunch and dinner both?"

"Just the dinner-hour."

They retired early. At eleven o'clock, the old house was quiet but wakeful. Lights went on in this window, out in that. In her room, Gabrielle lay in the middle of the big bed, her eyes following the fire-light that fell on the filmy folds of her wedding dress where it hung over a chair. Sheer white net over a spreading taffeta slip. She closed

her eyes, opened them again to the shadowy room. "To-morrow I won't be here," she thought, and felt excitement stir against poignant regret.

This was home, and in any land, home was one's link with security. But there was adventure in to-morrow. The wide gold wedding ring Jeffry had bought for her. Jeffry's arms—— She watched her world arise from the fire.

James nursed a Scotch and soda in the living-room. The lights from the Christmas tree and the sputtering fire defied the shadows. But a deep melancholy permeated James. To-morrow was Gabrielle's wedding day—Gabrielle, who expected everything from life. What would she find on this strange path where she had set her feet so firmly? He winced for her—for her shining eyes and her reaching heart. He feared for her tender spirit. Her year in Europe was visionary now. War might rule it out. Her marriage to Jeffry might bring her tragedy; its foundations were not secure. Even though he had found with Mary that love was not the first essential of marriage, he knew that Gabrielle would need all the love that Jeffry could bring her. She asked more of life than Mary.

Well, the family history flowed on. The Beltrami girls had cut loose now from the family stronghold. Julia had achieved her ends. Her marriage was a visible success. So was the Coachman's Inn—that conceit of his quite casually launched across the family dinner-table. Julia had found a husband and a career. Now Gabrielle was taking the same steps—the indissoluble Julia-Gabrielle link. But how would it be with his gentler daughter?

Rufus Drake, scraping ice from his windscreen in a lonely little town, told himself, "I'd no idea I could feel as lost as this."

In the early morning hours, Jeffry Lane stood at the window of his room, watching the snow bury a sleepy city. "Will life always be as still as this?" he wondered. And marvelled at his temerity in marrying Gabrielle, whom he loved so much less than she deserved. And across the snow, Julia's avid face appeared and reappeared wherever he looked.

In the guest-room which she disliked, Julia unpacked her bag and Richard's. She hung up the dress which she would wear to-morrow night as Gabrielle's only attendant. Grape chiffon that fell like gossamer from her hands.

She undressed and made the familiar trip to the bathroom. The water was too cold for a bath, so she washed hastily and returned to her room. She thought how much nicer was the room she had shared

with Gabrielle. She waited for Richard in the huge pineapple four-poster. Restlessly she waited, thinking if Richard were with her, she would think less of to-morrow. To-morrow and Jeffry Lane——

"I can't think about it. I can't think about it."

But the enamel clock on the bed-table ticked on and on. Finally she pulled on a satin robe and edged her feet into matching slippers. She hurried along the hall and softly opened Gabrielle's door. The firelight stretched long fingers over her sister's sleeping face. The room was filled with echoes of their years together—of friendly communion and harsh words and envious emotions and all the small details of living. Now the break was complete. To-morrow Gabrielle, too, would take on the new bond of marriage. With Jeffry, whom Julia had loved and put aside.

Slowly Julia walked back to the guest-room and climbed into bed once more. When Richard slipped quietly into the room, she was idly turning the pages of a fashion magazine.

"I didn't think you would be awake," he said. He sat down on the bed.

"Did you have a good time?"

He shrugged. "Fair. They drank beer and played poker." He took one of Julia's long braids and let it shimmer across his palm. "I can't drink beer without being god-awful sick so I'm cold sober. What do you think of that?"

She smiled faintly. "Amazing."

"Isn't it?" he asked absently. He pulled the braid gently, drawing her to him. "Why couldn't you sleep, Julia?"

"Nervous. Weddings are such disturbing things."

"Uncertain things," Richard said.

Her eyebrows met questioningly. "Uncertain?"

"Your future in a brief ceremony. Who knows what it's worth?" He bent his head to kiss her. His lips lingered over hers. "You're lovely, Julia."

Although he drew away from her, he held her prisoner with his eyes. "How about it, my dear? Did marriage bring you what you wanted?"

Her eyes plunged deep beyond his need of her into the ordered closet of her heart.

"Yes, Richard," she said, "it brought me what I wanted."

It was the morning of Christmas Eve.

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